

XLR8OR

BEST OF 2003

THE YEAR'S TOP
SOUNDS
CREWS &
CULTURE

73

DECEMBER 2003

ACCELERATING MUSIC AND

CULTURE

DESI BEATS HEAT UP

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CIVIL WAR HEROES

ALSO

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EVERY  HAS A STORY

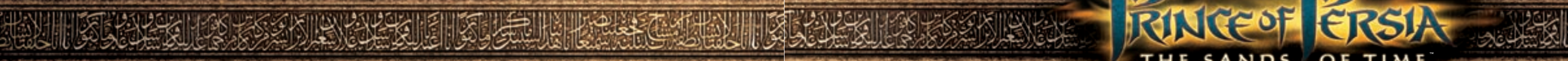
Gentlemen, start your midsoles

1984's APS Running Shoe featured cushioning and pronation control that could be adjusted using the yellow key you see on this page. In case you missed the shoe the first time around, we're re-issuing the APS in extremely limited numbers. See the APS, along with the rest of the Originals line, at adidas.com/originals



PRINCE OF PERSIA

THE SANDS OF TIME



NOT EVEN MY
DEATH

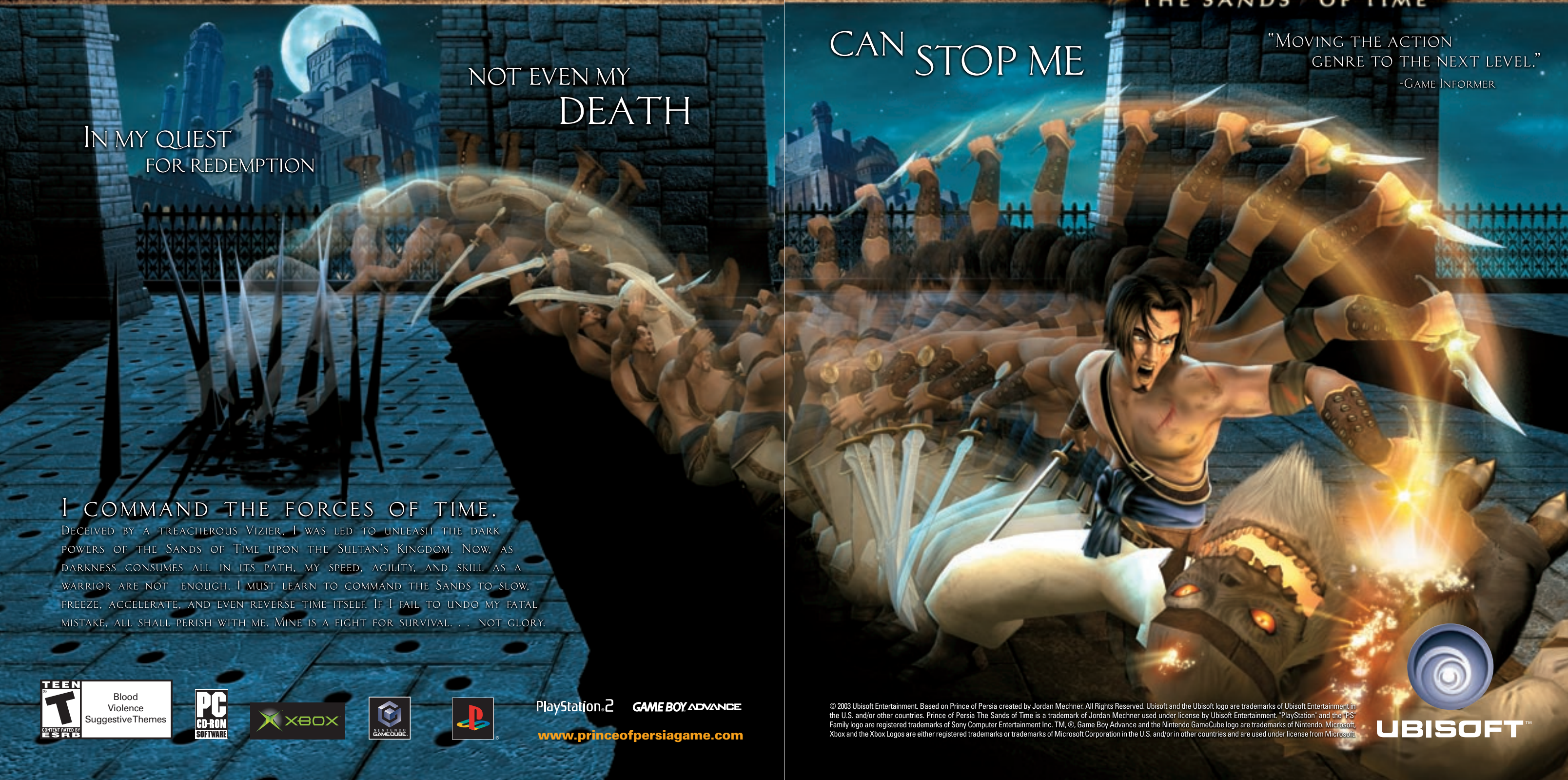
CAN STOP ME

"MOVING THE ACTION
GENRE TO THE NEXT LEVEL."
-GAME INFORMER

IN MY QUEST
FOR REDEMPTION

I COMMAND THE FORCES OF TIME.

DECEIVED BY A TREACHEROUS VIZIER, I WAS LED TO UNLEASH THE DARK POWERS OF THE SANDS OF TIME UPON THE SULTAN'S KINGDOM. NOW, AS DARKNESS CONSUMES ALL IN ITS PATH, MY SPEED, AGILITY, AND SKILL AS A WARRIOR ARE NOT ENOUGH. I MUST LEARN TO COMMAND THE SANDS TO SLOW, FREEZE, ACCELERATE, AND EVEN REVERSE TIME ITSELF. IF I FAIL TO UNDO MY FATAL MISTAKE, ALL SHALL PERISH WITH ME. MINE IS A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL. . . NOT GLORY.



Blood
Violence
Suggestive Themes



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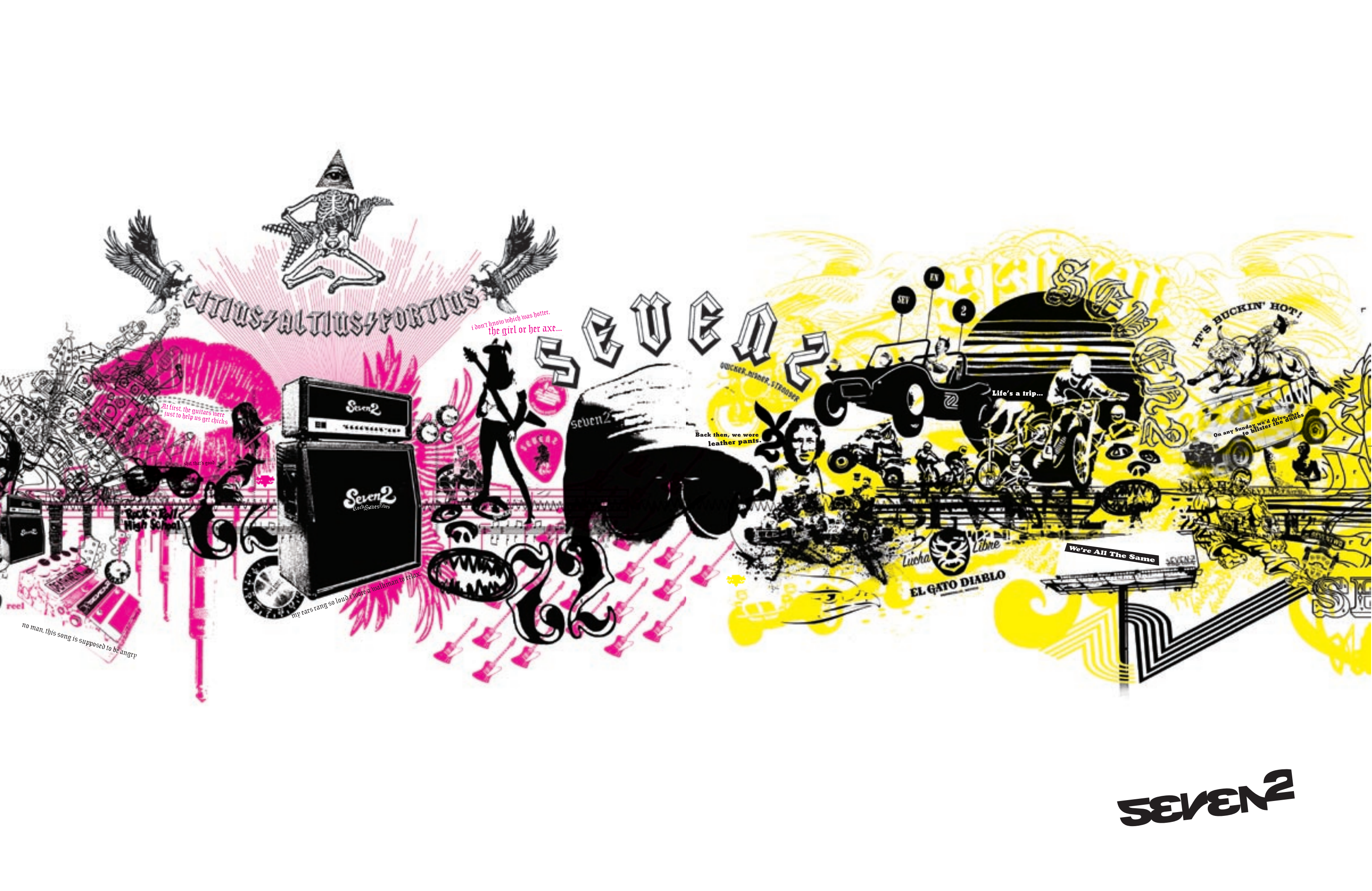


D-FINER

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CITIUS/ALTIUS/FORTIUS

i don't know which was hotter.
the girl or her axe...

At first, the guitars were
just to help us get chicks

ehh, that's good

Rock 'n' Roll
High School

no man, this song is supposed to be angry

my ears rang so loud i wore a malleman to relax

Back then, we wore
leather pants.

Life's a trip...

On any Sunday we'd drive off
to blister the dukes

IT'S BUCKIN' HOT!

We're All The Same

EL GATO DIABLO

SEVEN2



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CEX SYMBOL: EMO RAP STAR CEX AT XLR8R'S SAN FRANCISCO 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY EVENT
 IMAGE CHRISTOPHER WOODCOCK



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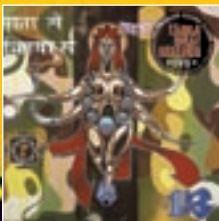
otherworldly beats

Da Lata Serious

featuring guest vocals by **JHELISA ANDERSON**, **BAABA MAAL**,
NINA MIRANDA, **MAMANI KEITA** and **PEDRO MARTINS**

Mixing Afro-inspired mayhem with broken beats and electronic
textures topped with an overwhelming earthy feel, **SERIOUS** is
an album that defies easy categorization.

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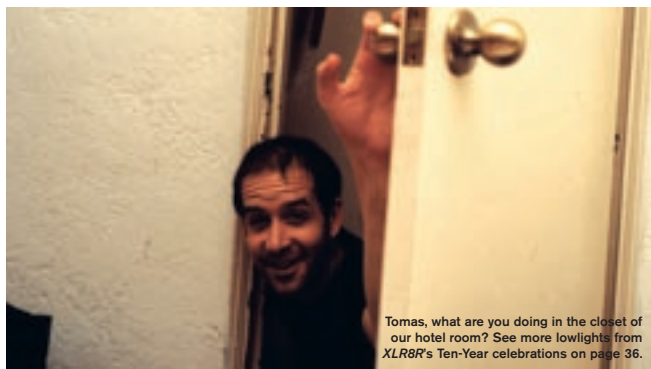


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ED'S RANT 12.03

ED'S RANT



Tomas, what are you doing in the closet of
our hotel room? See more lowlights from
XLR8R's Ten-Year celebrations on page 36.

Christopher Woodcock

TUG OF WAR

A friend emailed me the other day and asked me what I thought about the tug-of-war rag-
ing in American music between rock, hip-hop and pop for control of the dollar and the
booty. I told him, "Look man, it's not about the mega-context, it's about the micro-context."
I guess some would call it the "nano-context," but that sounds too much like something
Robin Williams said on *Mork & Mindy*, and the fact that I'm thinking this definitely means
we're still stuck in the 1980s vortex we've been in for the past three plus years now. Help!

Continuing on, I told my friend that what music today is *really* all about is reggae
dancehall going mainstream and following its own rules; the return of true indie
rock—from the Shins to Comets On Fire, Q And Not U, Tussle, Sushirobo and a hundred
other new groups; and about electronic music shedding electroclash for more original,
more danceable formats. This gives me hope, which is good, because there was a lot
not to have hope about this year.

This year? Let's just say '03 = the sequel. It even seems redundant for me to spell it
out. But it was Bush II, Gulf War II, bad economy II, Governor Reagan II (Schwarzenegger),
remakes of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Freaky Friday*. If this is what comprised the
social landscape of the richest and most powerful "democracy" on the planet, then it
sounds to me like the death bells of Battlestar America are ringing loud and clear.

What this year has taught me: people want some disconnection, they're tired of glitz
and glam. It has also taught me that hip-hop has become the new IDM—some of the new
production is astoundingly futuristic, but the raps mostly suck. Like James Brown said,
people were "talkin' loud, ain't saying nothing."

2004 will be the return of the black house producer, artist and DJ. House will be back,
but only thanks to the efforts of great African-American artists such as Detroit's DJ
Genesis, Mike Clark, Kenny Dixon Jr. and Amp Fiddler, DC's T Kolai, and even some Chi-
town producers bringing that soul bump 4/4 back. Believe.

So on that upbeat note, here's some other things that I used this year like scissors to
cut the ropes back and bum rush the club:

Tomas's Top 10 For 2003

1. **Psychonauts Music For Creatures (International Deejay Gigolos)** Creepy heart-
break psychedelic songs, like Spacemen 3 remixed by DJ Shadow as played by Carl
Craig at a bar in Cologne.
2. **Riddim albums.** Greensleeves Records, VP Records and their stable of willing pro-
ducers like Don Corleone and Lenky made me bounce and grind for a long time.
3. **Punjabi MC Beware (Sequence)** Representing the tip of the bhangra iceberg about
to strike head first with America's titanic hip-hop and urban music scene.
4. **Cinematic Orchestra Man With A Movie Camera (Ninja Tune)** Sonic jazz frames
that flicker and soothe.
5. **Hanna brings back soulful house.** Cleveland, Ohio's Warren Harris is on a tear like
no other American house producer. Lush, galactic funk traveling at 120 beats per minute.
6. **RDB DJs.** Leeds, UK. What time is it? Time for Rhythm Dhol Bass to mash it up,
bhanga/garage style.
7. **John Arnold Neighborhood Science (Ubiquity)** Along with Ayro, Beltran, Strand,
Theo Parrish, Delano Smith, Unsel Brown and more leading yet another Detroit charge
to the front of the dance pack.
8. **Kompakt.** No one can escape its shuffle.
9. **Shoegazer revival.** A retro-style that hadn't run its course is ushered back by the
Feedback To The Future (Mobile) compilation and a crop of young bands.
10. **Thomas Koner Zyklus (Mille Plateaux)** Meditation, natural phenomena, and the
inner realm of the brain's functions made into gorgeous sound sculpture. Listen carefully.
—Tomas, Tha' Ed



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STAFF BOX12.03

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ON THE COVER: RDB DJs illustration by Abigail's Party.

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CONTRIBUTORS



VIVIAN HOST

Her desk looks like a hamster pile and she's incapable of sending mail correctly, but *XLR8R* keeps Vivian around because she's fun at parties and can pull a story out of her ass quicker than you can say spellcheck. When she's not interviewing the likes of True Playaz, Tigerbeat 6, Mr. De, or Q and Not U—or listening to the Dizzee Rascal CD over and over and over—Vivian (aka DJ Star Eyes) is out

terrorizing small towns with her bouncy drum & bass and 2step flavors and ersatz fashion sense.



SCOTT THILL

Scott's chatted up Rob Swift, Davey D, Greg Palast, Egon Alapatt and more for the mighty *XLR8R*, although he's not sure what's in this issue. He also writes for *Salon*, *All Music Guide* and *Popmatters*, when not being slammed for publishing online muck-raker www.morphizm.com. You can take the boy outta Berkeley, but you can't take the Berkeley outta the boy.



PETER NICHOLSON

When he's not shaving his legs, climbing Napa's Oakville Grade, or otherwise being a pathetically geeky cycling poseur, Peter Nicholson occasionally cons an editor or two into publishing his tediously long sentences about music. Keepin' it real means changing diapers and dodging cows in Petaluma, CA, where even fewer people give a fuck about broken beat than the rest of the world (if

that's possible). One day he hopes to actually record some music, and not just criticize it.



J.J. STRATFORD

J.J. Stratford (right) divides her heart between London and Los Angeles, which in turn causes her to dream of a future tunnel that would link the two cities at the speed of light. This year she's had shows in Munich and London, contributed to *Textfield* magazine, and is currently working on close-up magic. And she plays AD&D! Check the stats: Strength: 16 (+3); Dexterity: 11; Constitution: 11;

Intelligence: 13(+1); Wisdom: 17(+3); Charisma: 14 (+2); Armor Class: 16; Hit Points: 12. Check out JJ's world at www.jjstratford.com.

BADAWI

CLONES & FALSE PROPHETS

Featuring: **Marc Ribot, Ben Perowsky, Doug Wieselman, Shahzad Ismaili, Raz Mesina, and Carolyn 'Honeychild' Coleman**

What Mesina has done is bring traditional Middle Eastern rhythms into the electronic age, while preserving their visceral natures. It works wonderfully. — Outburn

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LETTERS

All letters printed "as is."



CHA-CHING

Hi guys,
Just wanted to give you my personal thanks for pushing me into the celebrity spotlight. I practically passed the f*ck out when I saw my face plastered on the cover of your "Music and Technology" supplement. It was a geek-boy dream come true. So, even

though mom and dad still don't quite understand how I got famous for breaking thrift store toys, they still want a butt-load of copies of the issue to show off to friends and family.

Thanks,
Chachi

HOUSE GROUSE

Hello,

I just wanted to let you know I often enjoy your magazine but was a little disappointed with the October issue (#71) with reviews on the LA scene—to be more specific, the house music scene.

I've been in the LA area for quite sometime and noticed that your magazine never even mentioned some huge producers/DJs in LA that are world renowned with anthems and hit records spanning over the past several years—Deep Swing (JD & Eric), Eddie Amador, Tony Powell, Tony Largo (DyMK), DJ Lillyanne, just to name a few. All of them have worked so hard in this industry and deserve more recognition for the work they do in LA and what they contribute to the scene.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Craker

CAPITAL(IST) PUNISHMENT

I'm just writing to say that I completely agree with you about what you said about the cultural saturation that is occurring in America. It's strange how a movie like *2 Fast 2 Furious* can be on TV selling all types of things—including cell phones, burgers, and god knows what else—and it is constant.

I remember when at two in the morning you could watch TV and not see movie previews that are basically built up off the same "bling bling" concept. You're right about how we are being coerced at almost every turn. Buy this or you won't be cool, or no one will like you.

It's strange how in the news you can hear about something like a young child overcoming cancer and then have it sidelined for the two-second kiss that was on MTV's Video Music Awards between Britney And Madonna.

I just wanted to say my two cents and also to say keep up the good work. Your magazine is one of the few that I can trust to consistently bring good reviews, good music news, and artists to my attention. Don't let the bastards keep you down.

Stan Furch

Tomas responds:

Thanks so much for taking the time to write and give your thoughts. Probably the saddest part about the whole saturation of marketing concept, besides the fact that its mental traffic that deadens you to the real world, is that America is exporting this version of culture around the globe at a rapid rate. Call it the marketing side of global capitalism. It just can't be healthy. Anyway, onwards.

CORRECTIONS

In issue 72's Spin Cycle, we said Röyksopp were from Iceland. They are Norwegian. In issue 72's, we mistakenly identified a High Contrast tune as "Return to Forever." It is called "Return of Forever." In issue 72's album reviews section Detroit's Matthew Dear was mistakenly said to be from Ann Arbor, MI. His album *Leave Luck To Heaven* is out now on Spectral, a division of Ghostly International. In issue 72's album reviews section, the new album *Trash Art* on Phthalo should have been credited to About This Product not to Phthalocyanine. In issue 71's Aceyalone feature, we referred to "a little showcase in the back of a health food store called Project Blowed." The Good Life showcase, at the health food store of the same name, began in 1989 and spawned members of Freestyle Fellowship and Jurassic 5. An offshoot, Project Blowed, began five years later at Video 333/Kaos. In issue 71, we miscredited the Marvski & Mumbles feature. It was written by Anna Klafter.

BITTER BASTARD

Bitter Bastard's
10 Fonts That Are Absolute Crap

Staring at text all day makes B.J. "Bitter" Bastard extra salty. And, after a week of lovely, clean Helvetica and Arial, nothing sends the Bastard over the edge like a press release or flyer from someone out in the graphic design hinterlands who thinks they're cute with their kooky 72 point headers and liberal use of underline, bold and italic at the same time. Here are the worst offenders of the font world.

WHY, FONT, WHY?

1. **Lithos** Mandatory for any world beat festival in the park. Goes well with wood-block prints of happy Rastafarians playing the drums. Also used for Greek delis.

THE FONT MAKES ME WANT TO BUY A GYRO STAND.

2. **Fajita** As Lithos is to gyro stands, Fajita (also known as "Fiesta") is to Mexican restaurants. Add a little olé to everything you type with this squiggly little bastard. It must have been made in lab somewhere behind the dumpster of a Chevy's. Somewhere South of the Border, a Mexican graphic designer weeps softly under a cactus wearing a giant sombrero.

Good Lord, does it get any worse?

3. **Remedy** Emigre has birthed its fair share of doozies into the world, but this is the fucking omen. By law, if you own a coffee shop you must use this font (as well as play music by Deep Forest and Gypsy Kings). Bonus points when it's used in illegible six-point type on menus.

This font is absolute shite.

4. **Curlz MT** Sugar and spice and Curlz MT: that's what little girls are made of. Cause on-the-spot vomiting with this "nutty" font, the curlicued demon of choice for baby showers, little kids' birthday parties and ravers who want you to know just how wacky they really are.

This is supposed to be graffiti? OH, THIS IS YOU.

5. **Any 'Graffiti' font** Need to tap into that urban market without actually having to converse with the Negroes? Afraid the Krylon is gonna get all over your Manolos or precious iPod? Sprite, this means you.

I really really really hate this font.

6. **Sand** We think this is supposed to look like someone wrote in the sand. How quaint. Too bad it actually looks like a bad amalgam of Picasso's signature and the brush-strokes of an autistic child. This font is a favorite of weird artsy ladies in Berkeley—the ones that grow their armpit hair, buy bulk wheatgrass, and are always talking about their personal space and then fart on you when you push your shopping cart by them.

My mom stopped using this font in '98.

7. **Papyrus** Note to up-and-coming musicians: if you send us a demo CD that uses this loopy bitch, we will throw it in the trash. Is this font supposed to look Egyptian, or is it named after that fancy paper store in the mall?

THE FONT MAKES ME WANT TO BUY A GYRO STAND.

8. **Webdings/Wingdings** What the f**k is this good for? Created by someone who likes to eat foods shaped liked animals, and thinks "ding" is a term of endearment.

This font makes me want to hit someone.

9. **Brush Script** This one's for the budding graphic designer from community college who agreed to make the invitations for his cousin's wedding in Las Vegas. Also used on the personal stationery of Paul Oakenfold (no joke!).

WE'RE SO BORED OF THIS FONT.

10. **Helvetica** When the well runs dry just use this one. This one-trick pony is the sole source of transportation for the Designers Republic, or anything coming out of the UK for that matter. You must seriously have...wait a minute, we're using Helvetica!!!



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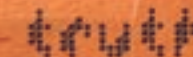
ADMIT ONE

ADMIT ONE

Soda doesn't contain addictive nicotine. Neither does frozen pizza, potato chips, salsa or cereal. But cigarettes do. So the only product that kills about 50 people an hour also contains a highly addictive ingredient that makes it incredibly difficult to quit. Makes sense. In Crazyworld.

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AUDIOFILE:
MATTHEW DEAR

DETROIT'S NEW-SCHOOL TECHNO POSTER BOY STRIVES FOR ELECTRONIC POP FUSION.

Matthew Dear can afford to *Leave Luck to Heaven*, although it may be said that he left luck to his laptop. In just a few short years of making music, this Detroit producer has scored a hat trick of sorts, landing record deals with the techno triumvirate of Windsor's Plus8, Berlin's Perlon and Ann Arbor's Ghostly International offshoot, Spectral.

If you've gone anywhere near a techno DJ in the past few months, chances are you've already had a taste of Dear's jerky, jiggy minimalism—an inspired fusion of rubbernecking funk and whipcrack percussion. His single “Dog Days” has been tearing it up from Berlin to the Bay Area to Montreal's MUTEK Festival, where it was jocked by Richie Hawtin, Perlon's Zip and Chilean tech DJ Ricardo Villalobos.

Dear didn't necessarily set out to make tracks that go bump in the night. Raised in south Texas, he lucked into electronic music thanks to an older brother's collection of new wave and EBM (industrial dance) records and a folk-musician father who helped him assemble an increasingly sophisticated home studio. “I got the idea that you can do it yourself from him,” says Dear, recalling the stacks of his dad's concert tapes lying around the house. “You can record yourself, archive yourself—that became second nature.”

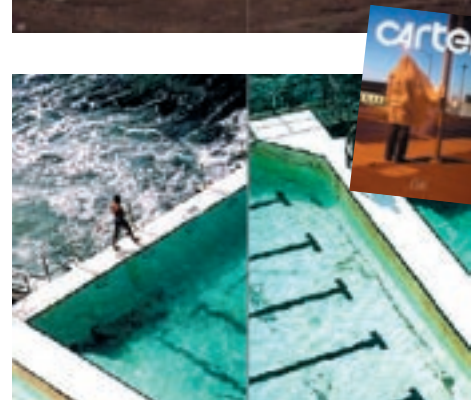
It wasn't until the mid-'90s, though, that Dear had a clear idea of where he wanted to go with his music. After a few chance encounters with mainstream electronica, he found himself at a Detroit rave, and everything clicked. “Once I saw the unity of the whole thing—the crowd, the DJ, the beat—I understood it all,” he says. “From there on out, I tried imitating what I'd heard. To this day, I'm just trying to imitate what I hear.”

Most producers would never admit to such a strategy, but Dear finds it essential to learn a formula, and then transcend it—he's gone so far as to create trance tracks, in secret, just to understand them.

Ultimately, Dear's goal is to meld techno with pop—a fusion well documented on the chipper, vocal “Dog Days.” “Depeche Mode were taking from what they heard in Kraftwerk and Detroit techno,” he says of one inspiration. “They took those machines and said, ‘Now we're going to have a band, put lyrics to it, and write great songs.’”

For Dear, songcraft is the next frontier of techno. “It would be great to start incorporating now what they did in the early '80s,” he explains. “If people started doing that with this new wave of weird sounds and minimal electronics, there's nobody to say we can't make that pop. I think it can go anywhere.”

www.matthewdear.com, www.ghostly.com



Tiger

Carter

SCREENZINES

It was bound to come to this. The screenzine: a magazine that lets you turn the pages with your mouse, retaining linear narratives at a fraction of the cost of printed matter and with exponentially higher distribution. But instead of rants on punk rock or politics filling the pages, screenzines present zine-like fringe thinking through the visual language of art and design.

"In the near future, I believe I can find the new shock," predicts Takeshi Hamada, editor of Tokyo-based progenitor *Tiger Magazine*. His vision has sparked countless designer-driven screenzines since *Tiger's* first multilingual issue launched in December 2000.

Delve Magazine's Paul Lombardi is among the inspired. "I started *Delve* because I noticed my friends and colleagues were complaining of a serious lack of vision on the part of their employers and patrons," says Lombardi, whose minimally designed site features haunting meditations on such themes as transportation, vex & silence, and the letter "H."

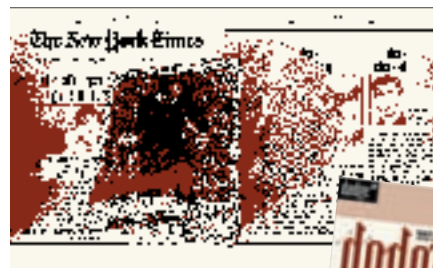
By following the print zine model, *Delve* captures the spirit of DIY publishing, but that's not the only reason a book-like architecture is appealing, says Dominic Forde of Melbourne's *Carter Magazine*. "Screenzines are about the work, not the interface. People are familiar with the linear format, so it becomes invisible and doesn't intrude on the work. There is something very natural and appealing about the narrative having a beginning, a middle and an end that can't be mucked about with."

Dodge Magazine publisher Brian Taylor took the model a step further by giving contributors strict

instructions to use only two RGB colors and no anti-aliasing for the magazine's first issue. The result mimics a two-color print job, but contains the crispness of pixel art.

Carter is not yet available offline, but *Delve* and others are collecting issues into printed compendiums, bringing the concept full-circle. Andy Simonato of Milan-based *This Is A Magazine* explains the challenge of making their printed version as compelling as the website. "We include confetti and bits of wool between the pages, we punch holes and add stickers," he says. "We include other artists' messages on slips of paper in envelopes or as mini-zines. In these ways, we try and create an enriched reader experience, paralleling the online rich-media languages. Because you can't touch a pixel!" *Liz Cordingley*

www.tigermagazine.org; www.xl5design.com/dodge; www.thisisamagazine.com; www.cartermagazine.com; www.delvemagazine.com



Delve

This Is A Magazine

Dodge

"Truly is a beautiful action movie..."

Ain't It Cool News

"A lean, hard-driving story and solemn atmosphere make 'The Princess Blade'... stand way above the pack."

Hollywood Reporter

"Bleakly compelling... With its stylized, near-surreal comic-book look and roots, 'The Princess Blade' has all the makings of a cult film."

Kevin Thomas, Los Angeles Times

The martial arts motion picture event of 2003 is now on DVD.

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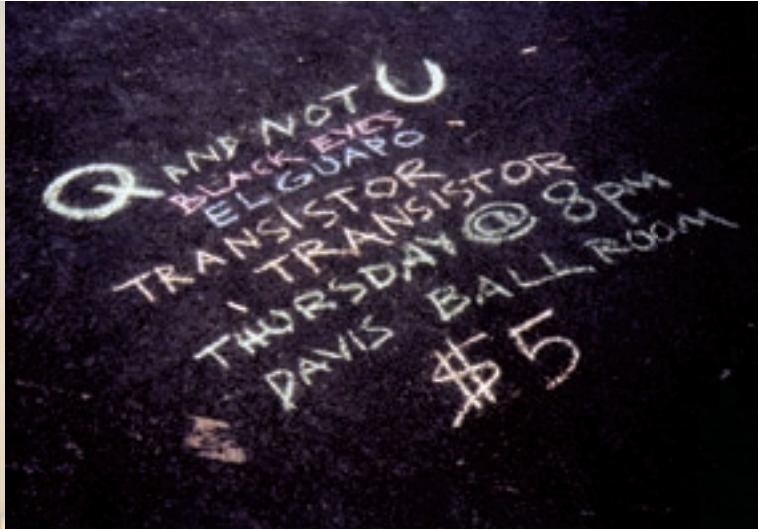
ROAD RASH: Q AND NOT U TOUR DIARY

Communiqués from Washington DC quartet Q and Not U's fall tour with Black Eyes, El Guapo, Antelope and French Toast. The cast:

John Davis (drums), Harris Klahr (guitars, keys, vocals), Chris Richards (guitars, keys, vocals), Shawn "Muddy" Brackbill (photographs, driving, roadie, coffee).



Feeling bookish: John, Harris and Chris in Toledo, OH



Harris at the Hoover Dam in Las Vegas, NV



Holy beard: Black Eyes joins John onstage in Northampton, MA



The pied piper of punk: Chris leads the masses in San Diego, CA.



The improbable drum circle in Storrs, CT



Harris on bass (or is it Chris?)



Peer pressure in Phoenix, AZ



John follows strict safety regulations in Northampton, MA.



The birds are alright: Northampton, MA



The band rocks out in Missoula, MT.

9.7.03: PHILADELPHIA, PA

Some might gauge the success of a show by applause, attendance, or money. I'm going to start judging by humidity. After this show, linoleum floors were slippery with sweat and walls were damp to the touch. It was as if the First Unitarian Church had birthed 500 people into the Philly streets. The tour was off to a wet, beautiful start.

Van listening: Lungfish *Love Is Love*

9.10.03: STORRS, CT

Tonight's show at the University of Connecticut took place in a student lounge adjacent to a dance studio. The rooms were separated by a glass partition, creating the hilarious illusion of two-dozen co-eds Jazzercising in perfect time with El Guapo's new street jamz. "Dance punk" aesthetes, eat your heart out!

Van listening: Ludus *The Visit/The Seduction*

9.11.03: NORTHAMPTON, MA

Black Eyes joined us on stage during our finale for a raucous improv percussion jam/political rant. We ended up leading the crowd in a procession out of the Smith College ballroom and into the street. It was a beautiful communal moment with everyone singing, clapping and drumming along. Only later did we realize that we were leading a drum circle on a campus quad. The next morning we heard about the death of two Johns (Cash and Ritter). In mourning, we took some rowboats out on an artificial lake.

Van listening: Da Hawney Troof *Who Likes Ta?*

9.25.03: MISSOULA, MT

Be warned: after dark the streets of Missoula are overrun by coke-heads and bears.

Van listening: Al Franken *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them* book on CD.

9.29.03: GOLETA, CA

We played in a daycare center lined with shelves of toys and stuffed animals. Kinda creepy, but I was too nauseous to notice after eating a dubious vegetarian fast food dinner prior to the show. By set's end, In 'N' Out Burger had lived up to its name. Fun fact: Vomiting into a bucket while playing guitar isn't as difficult as one would imagine.

Van listening: Beach Boys *Friends/20-20*

10.2.03: SAN DIEGO, CA

We were invited to play a local TV program called *Fox Rox* and gleefully jumped at the opportunity to slam the Bush regime on Fox Television. Apparently, this local affiliate isn't owned by the Murdoch empire, giving us a clear conscience and free reign to say whatever we like. We played "Soft Pyramids" and "X-Polynation," and explained why the current administration is a dangerous crypto-fascist abomination.

Van listening: Roger Troutman *Many Facets of Roger*

10.3.03: LAS VEGAS, NV

After closing our set with a delightfully sloppy cover of the Screamers' "Vertigo," we quickly packed up the gear in anticipation of dropping our savings on black jack (and at this very moment, Roy Horn was being attacked by a tiger across town). Some kid let me try his Stay Awake Eye Drops, which worked wonders, and I promptly hailed a cab to the Boardwalk Casino to catch a performance by Purple Reign, the Prince Tribute Band. The ensemble was a curious hybrid of the Revolution and the NPG, with a fake Morris Day to boot. Prince was like 6'2", but he did all the splits and spins with admirable conviction. Party up!

Van listening: Vaselines *The Way of the Vaselines*

10.4.03: PHOENIX, AZ

Tour equations: boredom + electric clippers + peer pressure = me getting a mohawk. Harris' style + Harris' influence = Black Eyes in blazers. John + all black outfit + roulette table = 60 bucks. Muddy + coffee = never. 30 shows played + 17 shows to go = our longest tour ever. We'll be home in a fortnight. Give thanks.

Van listening: Simon and Garfunkel *Old Friends*

www.qandnotu.org

**ACID TRIPS AND TALKING TREES
INSPIRE THE IDYLIC RAMBLINGS
OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC'S MOST
UNDEFINABLE FOURSOME.**

A band can't *not* be a band, can it? Sure it can, but only if it's *not really* a band. In other words, it's got to be a collective.

"We never wanted to be 'The Somethings,'" says Animal Collective's Deakan (a.k.a. Josh Dibb). "We're just four dudes who play music together and like to make records." This ideology has driven Deakan and collective-mates Avey Tare, Panda Bear and Geologist to disassociate themselves from the dictates of any particular rock, noise or neo-hippy ethos.

"I was getting really bored with the popular [underground bands] in the late '90s," Avey Tare (known to friends as David Portner) complains. "The scene got old really fast." With only a few

years' distance from the late '90s, just about everyone agrees that whiny indie rock and post-no-wave drudgery have become just as tiresome as the asymmetrically blasé electro scene.

In order to escape the bromidic punk nightmare crashing down around them in New York, the Collective retreated to the forests of their native Maryland to record their third album, *Campfire Songs*, which was released in March on Catsup Plate Records. Uninformed by the obligations of being a band called 'The Somethings,' Animal Collective uses *Songs* to take us on a beautifully acoustic (acid) trip through the woods. "I had been obsessed with doing an outside recording for a while," says Geologist (Collective member Brian Weitz). With the sounds of rustling leaves and nature hikes hidden throughout the record, *Songs* is his wish come true.

On the Collective's latest album, *Here Comes the Indian*—the first release on their own

Paw Tracks imprint—the noisy fantasies of their earlier recordings are infused with the pure and idyllic tranquility of their current state of mind. The record blends psychedelic guitars and pounding tribal drums with indefinable fidgeting electronic sounds and rambling vocals that sound like talking trees. The outcome completes the Collective's accidental evisceration of every negative stereotype of the hacky-sacking, Birkenstock-wearing, stinky hippie you've never wanted to befriend.

While certainly not hippies, bong hits and acid trips inform the sound of Animal Collective. "The D.A.R.E. program did *not* work," jokes Geologist, a recent graduate of Columbia's Master Program in Environmental Politics and Marine Biology. Chalk the group up as an accidental birth that turned into a bundle of joy—if the D.A.R.E. mental condom had actually worked, Animal Collective would have never been born.)

Here Comes The Indian is out now: www.paw-tracks.com



AUDIOFILE:
ANIMAL
COLLECTIVE

Animal Collective (from left): Dave Portner (Avey Tare), Brian Weitz (Geologist), Noah Lennox (Panda Bear) and Josh Dibbs (Deakan)



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MIYUKI SHIBUYA

(Mini Mini Market)

What is your favorite artist/album of 2003?

LFO's new one, and Hollertronix.

What is your favorite clothing item of 2003 and how often do you wear it?

Irony's pink top. All the time.

What do you want for the holidays?

A new memory for my brain, and a trip to Hawaii.

What's in the bag?

Wallet, ice cream, lip balm, makeup, cigarettes, lighter.

Have you ever shoplifted anything?

Only once—a strawberry eraser when I was six at a Sanrio shop.



ERIKA VALE

(Store owner/Mini Mini Market partner)

What is your favorite artist/album of 2003?

Songs: Ohia, *The Magnolia Electric Co.*

What is your favorite clothing item of 2003 and how often do you wear it?

Minnie Wilde's corduroy knickers. I wear them twice a week.

What do you want for the holidays?

A guy who's worth it.

What's in the bag?

My purse? Notebook, pen, lipgloss, chocolate! And Kris Kristofferson.

Have you ever shoplifted anything?

I shoplifted a shitload from ages 12-14.

Who knows what? Now I pay for it every day since I own a store—karma!

ON THE SPOT: WILLIAMSBURG, NYC

You may have heard that Bedford Avenue in Williamsburg is a non-stop promenade for the unstoppably hip. It's true. We spent a crisp autumn day on the corner of Bedford and North 5th Street, putting passers-by on the spot about fashion, their favorite sounds and the five-finger discount. *Melanie Samarasinghe*



ANTHONY PAPPALARDO

(Computer technical advisor/tech support)

What is your favorite artist/album of 2003?

Breakdown's *Both Demos* and Crooked Fingers' *Red Devil Dawn*

What is your favorite clothing item of 2003 and how often do you wear it?

My eyepatch. Rocking an eyepatch on the reg is an icebreaker. I wear it two times a week.

What do you want for the holidays?

To be able to smoke in bars again.

What's in the bag?

Style Wars DVD, a Latin-to-English dictionary, and a Gucci belt. Psyche!

Have you ever shoplifted anything?

Yes. I stole a Big E CD in Los Angeles to avoid "beef."



DESTINEY

(Waitress)

What is your favorite artist/album of 2003?

The White Stripes

What is your favorite clothing item of 2003 and how often do you wear it?

My Seven Jeans. Three times per week.

What do you want for the holidays?

To spend time with my family.

What's in the bag?

Hair products.



BELKYS GARCIA (Law student, left) & **JADE** (Unemployed)

What is your favorite artist/album of 2003?

B: Talking Heads, *More Songs About Buildings and Food*

J: This Bike Is A Pipe Bomb and Against Me!

What is your favorite clothing item of 2003 and how often do you wear it?

B: New brown scarf. Only three times so far.

J: Socks, everyday.

What do you want for the holidays?

B: Money.

J: Nothing.

What's in the bag?

B: Magazine, wallet, school papers.

Unfortunately, not my cell phone.

J: My life.

Have you ever shoplifted anything?

B: Lots of lipstick and bras in high school.

J: Yes.



JASON CHANG

(Student)

What is your favorite artist/album of 2003?

Mogwai

What is your favorite clothing item of 2003 and how often do you wear it?

Ray-Ban Cop sunglasses. I wear them almost everyday!

What do you want for the holidays?

A new laptop.

What's in the bag?

I don't have a bag, only a zip disk. I'm going to school.

Have you ever shoplifted anything?

No, but I want to try... a G4 Powerbook!



The All Natural label family (from left): All Natural DJ Tone B, Spotlite (half of Daily Plannet), Kevynn Global (a.k.a. The Mighty Allstar, the other half of DP), Iomos Marad and All Natural MC Capital D; with Rita J in the basket.

TONE B AND COMPANY HOLD IT DOWN FOR PROGRESSIVE HIP-HOP, WINDY CITY-STYLE

For a group that many say run things in Chicago's hip-hop scene, the All Natural label has surprisingly escaped the onus of representing the region. "We were from the suburbs," says producer and label co-founder Tone B. Nimble of his late-'80s high school days in Chitown's Flossmoor area with his partner, MC Capital D. "We didn't even know about the scene in Chicago. We vibed off mix tapes of New York stuff—KRS One, Dana Dane, Just Ice, Run DMC. That's what lit us up."

And that's what inspired Tone and Cap to light up the Windy City. As All Natural, they sharpened their skills in their college days, relentlessly touring the roads between Atlanta, Georgia and Jackson, Mississippi before return-

ing home and recording tracks that got signed to the soon-to-be-doomed Wild Pitch label in 1995. The lesson, says Tone: "Don't take anything for granted. Wild Pitch didn't screw us, but we thought, 'We're gettin' old. We better put this stuff out ourselves now.'"

Luckily for progressive hip-hop heads, All Natural Inc. has ignored both regional boundaries and hip-hop's over-30 glass ceiling. It has steadily unleashed a five-year flow of organically funky and lyrically substantial singles and albums by All Natural, Mr. Greenweez, Iomos Marad, twin MCs Daily Plannet and all of the above as Family Tree.

It all started with the groundbreaking 2000 release of All Natural's globally vaunted first album, *No Additives, No Preservatives*, packaged with *Fresh Air*, a 95-page book of prose and lyrics by Capital D. Tone explains: "We were saying, 'We're on some next. We're about

to do something no one else has done. Take notice!" The same alert goes for AN Inc.'s recent release of Iomos Marad's conscious debut album, *Deeply Rooted*, and Daily Plannet's more party-wise *Team Daily*, and will stay in effect next year as All Natural's third album precedes full-length efforts by Mr. Greenweez and truly fresh newbie Rita J (who blew it right up on Family Tree's recent 12", "Virgo").

Backed by beats from super producers like Dug Infinite, J. Rawls, Madd Crates and the Molemen, these artists are foreshadowing the next rhyme revolution. "All the groups have traits and influences from the early- to mid-'90s," says Tone. "It's not super old-school, but it *is* conscious, which *seems* old-school because most rappers now aren't tryin' to be conscious."

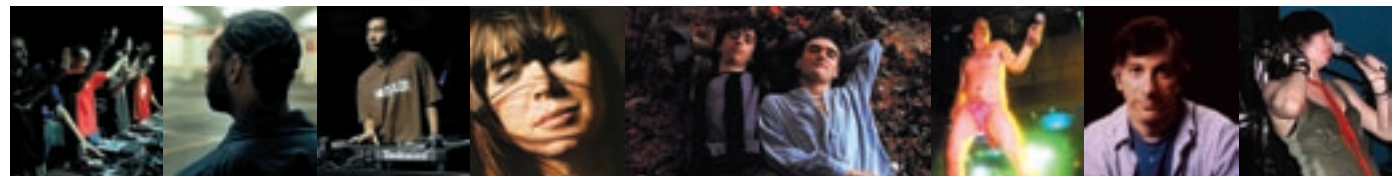
www.allnaturalhiphop.com



IMAGE: Jessica Miller STYLING: Vivian Host

FALL FASHION IS TO DIE FOR, mixing mesh, camo prints and tough accessories in shades of olive green, hot pink and white. From left to right: Iris wears camo jacket by Nikita (\$94), mesh shirt by H&M (\$16), skirt by Club Monaco (\$70), white purse by Diesel (\$80), Fornarina shoes, fingerless fishnet gloves, and pink bra stylist's own; Susan wears top by Diesel Style Lab (\$100), Pep Squad skirt by Discotheque (\$32), Rock On bracelets by Discotheque (\$14 per set), Fornarina boots stylist's own; Kimi wears Keiko Backside hoodie by Nikita (\$62), Destroy belt by Howe (\$65), mesh shirt, miniskirt, fishnets and Converse model's own.

SPIN CYCLE Results are in: The **DMC World Finals** wrapped up September 13 and 14 at London's **Brixton Academy**. Canada's **Dopey** placed first in the Technics DJ Battle; France's **Coup 2 Cross** won the Team Competition; and the UK's **Tigerstyle** won the battle for World Supremacy • Groove Be Gone: **Groovetech.com**, the Internet radio station and online shop, closed its doors in late September due to slow profits • The **RIAA** recently went after **mixtapes**, confiscating \$10,000 in artist-sanctioned tapes from DJs **Kay Slay** and **Green Lantern** at Indianapolis record store Berry's Music • On January 20th, **Thirsty Ear** releases an album of poetry by Greek Nobel Laureate **George Seferis**, resung by indie faves including **Cat Power** and Sonic Youth's **Lee Ranaldo** • You Shoe Is Ridiculous: Rapper **Ludacris** will be releasing a footwear line called Da' Hood Collection. The first shoe, **Da Block**, will be out February '04 • Congrats to German experimental techno label **Meteosound**, which celebrated its third b-day in October • Shoegazers **Mojave 3** have recently been remixed by **Ulrich Snauss**, **Manitoba** and **Minotaur Shock**. Check www.4AD.com for info • The instrumental arm of !!!, **Out Hud**, has just wrapped up a tour with **Le Tigre** and **The Rapture** • Swedish house and techno label **Kass Recordings** is back on the scene with releases from **David Panda**, **Swedish Cohigh** and **Eric Ericksson** (who also records as **Spatio** and **Rocketboy**) • From Vienna with love: Austrian heads **Stefan Nemeth** of **Radian** and **Michaela Schwentner** recently started the **Mosz** label, which will feature experimental electronic releases from **Kapital Band**, **Martin Siewert** and **Pan American** in 2004 • **Har Mar Superstar** and Yeah Yeah Yeah's frontwoman **Karen O** are reportedly teaming up to record a sleazy R&B song • Famous for their DJ mixed CDs, **Global Underground** recently launched new label **GU Music** with the November 4 release of **Pako & Frederick's** artist album **Atlantic Breakers** • Detroit-based **Ian Marston** (who recorded as Iridium and Electrobaby) passed away on September 26 after a long battle with cancer. Our condolences to his friends and family • **Vikter Duplaix** releases a collection of rare mixes and previously unreleased tracks on !K7 in the end of January • Rap sheet: November saw new releases by **Djinji Brown**, **Tariq L** and **Asheru and Blue Black**, whose *48 Months* compiles unreleased material from 1995-1999 • **Jimmy Edgar** releases his **Warp Records** debut, the "Access Rhythm" EP, on January 26 • Throw down: In **Stones Throw** news, look out for the **Madlib & MF Doom** collabo as **Madvillain** in January; Madlib will be remixing **Radiohead's** "Sit Down, Stand Up" for 2004; and sub-label **Now Again** reissues '70s act **LA Carnival's** *Pose A Question* on December 10 • A poster to the Morrissey-solo.com message board claims an eccentric client has bequeathed his estate to **Morrissey** and **Johnny Marr**, provided they spend one hour in a room together • The **ACLU** has released a guide for fans and promoters called *What the Rave Act Means For You*. Order it at www.aclu.org • Take action against the **Ecstasy Awareness Act** at www.emdef.org • Apocalyptic opportunity: **Independent Opposition** is seeking entries for a compilation CD of tracks themed around the **end of the world**. Apply at www.independentopposition.com • Re-activate at www.bandsagainstbush.com • Hasta la vista, baby.



from left: Coup 2 Cross, Madlib by B+, Dopey, Cat Power, Johnny Marr and Morrissey, Har Mar Superstar, Lee Ranaldo, Karen O

Over the past year, graffiti writers and illustrators have steadily weaned themselves off walls and magazine pages, and slinked onto a mind-boggling assortment of toys and products—from mini-skate decks to beer cozies. Thanks to Boston-based artist and independent curator Eddie Martinez, those folk art staples—Russian nesting dolls—are now in the mix.

For *The Russian Doll Show*, Martinez asked nearly 40 artists, including Jordan Isip, Andy Jenkins and Suzannah Sinclair, to each paint a set of five round-headed icons. The artists' responses wander far from the traditional motif of a stout *matryoshka* with tots in tow. Ned Vena, for example, created a Russian junior mafia (dolls accessorized with doo-rags), while Kevin Cyr serialized his set (a monster truck is emblazoned on the biggest doll, followed by a pick-up, station wagon, sedan and, on the tiniest, a moped). *The RDS* makes one wonder whether the graffiti/design/illustration complex will start hunting down more suburban artifacts for revival and revision. Futura 2000 toilet seat covers, anyone? *Michael Haggerty*

The Russian Doll Show opens in December at 65 Hope Street Gallery in Brooklyn and will travel to Boston and Philly before landing at New Image Art in LA in May.



Dolls by (left to right): Denise Kupferschmidt, Suzannah Sinclair, Joseph Hart and Eddie Martinez

Hello!



SUAD's PJ (left) and Smiley

THE TRUE STORY OF HACKNEY'S BREAKBEAT PIONEERS.

In the late '80s and early '90s, Shut Up and Dance was the Public Enemy of rave. While everyone else was off making escapist anthems like "Everything Starts with an E" and "Euphoria," SUAD's PJ and Smiley were dropping tracks like "Autobiography of a Crackhead" and "10 Pounds to Get In," which combined the hearty punch of sped-up breakbeats with lyrics about drug casualties and the high cost of raving. Predating the Criminal Justice Bill, their 1991 album, *Dance Before the Police Come!*, was themed almost entirely around illegal partying.

Raving is in SUAD's blood. The duo started off as sound system operators at the tender age of 14, with PJ and Smiley MCing and drum & bass DJ Hype behind the turntables. By day, they produced demos, looked for a record deal and competed in b-boy contests; at night, they

threw break-in warehouse parties in their Hackney neighborhood, charging two or three pounds for an all-night reggae/hip-hop dance.

"When we started we thought we were a rap band," says Smiley. "But what we were doing was totally different to the type of rap music that was big at the time—it was fast. The hip-hop people didn't get it, but the people in the rave scene were playing our stuff on the pirates. They liked it because it sounded different—instead of just the usual 4/4, it had drum sounds and rolls and things happening."

Fed up with waiting around to get signed, Shut Up and Dance ended up starting their own breakbeat label, SUAD. "It was unheard of at the time," explains PJ. "Even our own friends were like 'You're gonna start a label? Shut up! We just did it anyway. We had no experience in the game, no advice, hardly any money, but we just thought, 'Fuck it! We're going to do it.'" Along with premiering acts like Nicolette and the Ragga Twins, the label's early releases

showcased SUAD's unique fusion of techno, hip-hop and Jamaican-derived MC culture—the first documented instance of jungle music.

PJ and Smiley continue to create unique beat templates, inspiring other producers to refine the raw ideas they've presented into whole new genres. There's evidence of plenty of untapped styles on their latest album, *Reclaim the Streets*, which ranges from skittering, experimental riddim tracks ("The Crackhead Riddim," "The Guestlist Riddim") to old-school disco house flavors ("Supernova") to dark, drum & bass-derived breaks ("Reclaim the Streets").

The album was a labor of love for the duo, but they're quick to specify that they don't want to just be limited to one section in a record shop. "We think we're bigger than that," explains PJ. "I don't want to be held down to something. I say just do your thing, and if they don't like it they don't like it." In other words, just shut up and dance. }

www.shutupanddance.co.uk



PASS THE REMOTE You might love *Remote* just because it's free, but that's only the beginning. *Remote* is a DVD magazine that compiles hard-to-find independent music videos, animations, video art and short films into a handy "mixtape" format. It has underground stuff you may have heard of (like Ruben Fleischer's booty-bass documentary *Ghetto Tracks*), and things you've been dying to see (like Ladytron's video for "Seventeen"). The newest issue features videos from T.Raumschmiere, Plastikman, Mogwai, Natural History and Jaga Jazzist—not your typical corporate-modulated playlist. *Remote*, unlike MTV2, is truly democratic: *you* get to decide what you want to watch and what you don't. And did we mention that it's free? *Michael Haggerty*

www.remoteondvd.com



Ruben Fleischer for DJ Format's "We Know Something"



Paperad for Here Are The Exstream Animals



Ryan Junell for The Golt Pink Truth's "Promofunk"

How are you?

BOOM! GERMANY'S SEXIEST IMPRINT DROPS DISKO BOMBS.

Pop quiz: Munich label Disko B is best known for a) jack tracks; b) classic electro; c) ambient minimalism; d) leftfield pop; e) banging, main-room mentalism. Sorry, if you answered anything other than "f" (for "fuckin' all of the above, and then some") you clearly need a refresher on the history of this Munich powerhouse.

Launched in 1991 with a single from New York no-wavers Silicon Soul, Disko B—which stands for "Disko Bombs"—has lit the fuse under everything from DJ Hell's "original street techno" to I-f's developmentally arrested electro, and from Susanne Brokesch's delicately dusted mind melds to Tobias Schmidt's furrowed-brow floor-fillers.

Thankfully for music fans, the only collateral damage is to rulebook-toting purists. As might be expected from a label affiliated with acts like Hell, Artist Unknown and Crème de Menthe, a healthy dose of camp suffuses much of Disko

B's output. Hence, we get Patrick Pulsinger and Gerhard Potuznik covering Bauhaus's goth cliché "Bela Lugosi's Dead" and Dakar & Ginser turning the Stooges' "I Wanna Be Your Dog" into a grinding, arpeggiated sex machine. Still, the kill-yr-idols approach isn't as irreverent as it sounds. If one thing remains sacred across all the label's releases, it's the will to rock, whether "rock" signifies Electronicat's strange update of Gary Glitter via shuffle-tech, or the Mysterymen's willingness to dissolve stock electro into a pool of feedback that could hurt even Merzbow's ears.

Listeners shouldn't take Disko B's cheekiness as evidence of the apolitical stance typical of New York electroclash. According to press officer Michael Späth, politics have always been a part of the label's approach. Founded in 1991 by Peter Wacha (known for his punk and new wave label Sub Up), Disko B—and Wacha's famous Ultraworld parties and Ultraschall club—played a key role in building a progressive platform within conservative Bavaria, aligning

experimental-but-populist musicians and DJs with anti-fascists and gay rights supporters. Indeed, Disko B's links with I-f's Viewlexx label were forged largely through the network of squats connecting Munich and Den Haag.

Fittingly for a label that represents the interconnected destinies of the New Europe (and beyond), Späth describes the "unspoken conceptual basis of Disko B" as the assumption "that there are no geographical frontiers in music." Silicon Soul's "Who Needs Sleep Tonight," the first record on the label, "was a starting shot for the globalized approach of a huge community dropping disko bombs all over the world," says Späth. The label's new releases prove that there's plenty of ordnance left in the armory: New York duo Neulander and Newcastle's Mystermen just dropped full-lengths, and Silicon Soul re-released their 20-year-old album *Pouti*, a potential classic of electronic no-wave, in November. In the arsenal of Disko B, even decades-old material packs a wallop. www.diskob.de

OBSESSIONS: DIVERSE

Chicago's *Diverse* dropped well-timed singles with Lyrics Born and Jean Grae before riddling his debut album on Chocolate Industries, *1 AM*, with crisp and cohesive rhymes that actually mean something. Lyrically, Diverse claims inspiration from old-school stalwarts like Rakim, KRS-One, Public Enemy and De La Soul's Posdnuous. "They were conceptual MCs," he says. "You gathered a great sense of where they were from and what they had experienced from listening to their raps." We recently asked Diverse what he gets down with in between bumping the classic flavors. *Tyra Bangs*

Ani DiFranco: We're at a place musically where people use so many different layers, and everything is so done up and overproduced. Her music has a very raw quality about it and it's minimal. Listening to her sing, you feel like you're in the studio with her, and she doesn't have any inhibitions to what she'll say lyrically.

Greek Food: When I was 14 years old, I started eating Greek food and it turned me out. Now, I eat gyros obsessively, and if you give me some Greek fries and a big container of that tzatziki sauce, I'll tear it up.

Chicago Cubs: My grandmother got me hip to the Cubs. I used to go to her house when I was young and most of our day would consist of sitting around waiting for the Cubs to come on television. It's unfortunate that I'm a Cubs fan because they keep breaking my heart.

Videogames: I get into sports games like *NBA Live* or *Madden*. I'm a big Allen Iverson fan—I've been following him since he was playing at Georgetown—so I usually play him, or [in *Madden*] I'll be Mike Vick from the Atlanta Falcons.

Cooking: My uncle is a gourmet chef—he definitely influenced me in his cooking methods. I have some range. Anything on the seafood dock, I can probably do it justice. I'll kill a beef brisket and some roasted garlic potatoes—time and patience is the key to that one.

www.chocolateindustries.net



AUDIOFILE:
DISKO B

Disko B staff (from left): Michael, Gero, Upstart, Mathieu and Juergen

We're fine, thanks.

You are reading a message from Adult Swim, the brand that represents the late-night animated programming on Cartoon Network. Our animation is created specifically for adults. Some of it is comedy. Some of it is action. All of it is different.

Adult Swim is the outer fringe of the television universe. We stand here, all alone, and we say, "Great!" If you ask us, it is happy-making to not be where the others are. We are, in fact, committed to staying in this very spot.

Would you like to join us?

Over here is an attorney with wings, a superhero who hosts a talk show and a dancing wad of meat. Yes, we are an outpost. But when every third person you meet is auditioning for a reality program, aren't we all that's left? We'll just be right over here, thank you, and certain people among you have heeded the call. Some of them are steaming the milk in your latte. Some of them are delivering your overnight package. Some of them are trading your stocks. Be nice to all of them, for they can all use some extra sleep.

And so, it has come to this. Programming from the edge. Giant robot neighbors. A vibrant, visual medium that talks to you in plain old black-and-white text. And all we're asking for you to do is to please check us out.

Television = Behemoth. Adult Swim = You.

SUNDAY - THURSDAY
11pm-5am
on



Go to AdultSwim.com
if you'd like to learn more.



[adult swim]

It has come to this.



Photographer David Black (center) and friends a go-go in NYC.



W.A.R. of the Worlds: Crack W.A.R. gets freaky in NYC.



Haaaay! Promoter Willie Mack and marketing director Emily Griffin in NYC.



Neil Schield and Stephanie Bitters in LA.



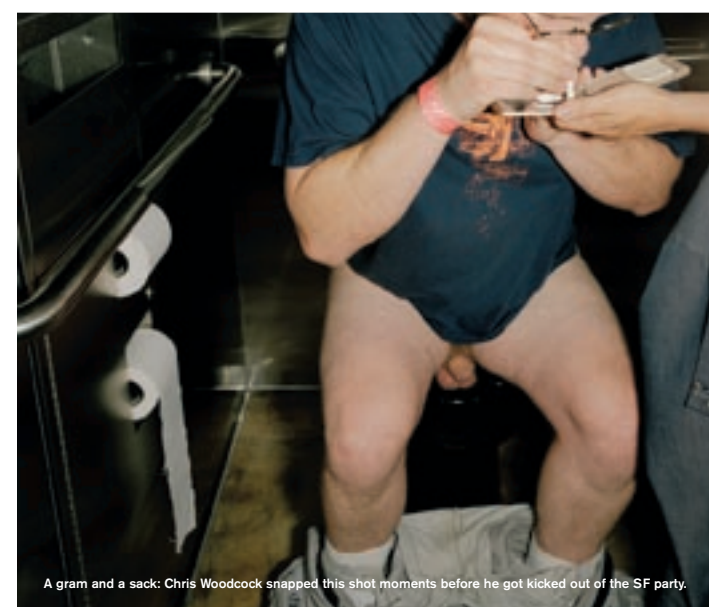
Babes in Toyland: The Kid Robot staff shows off adult toys. No, not that kind.



Contributor Anna Klaffer (a.k.a. DJ Anna) and friend Jorma in LA.



Where am I?: Buffmonster (in LA).



A gram and a sack: Chris Woodcock snapped this shot moments before he got kicked out of the SF party.



Advertising director Melanie Samarasinghe, editor Vivian Host, production musketeer Brianna Pope and American Apparel's Kara Messina in LA.

XLR8R 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

We came. We saw. We drank... heavily. In conjunction with adidas Originals, XLR8R celebrated its tenth birthday in debauched grandeur with three parties: San Francisco, Los Angeles and New

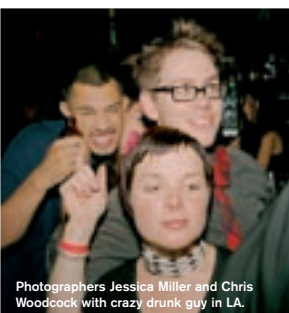
York. Rump-shaking sets were delivered by Blaktronics, Beans, Wildchild, John Tejada, Crack W.A.R. and DJ Language, among others, and in San Francisco Cex scared everyone with his club kid platforms and goth rap. Art from Hersk, Buffmonster, David Choe and Keith Jacobs livened up the surroundings, and XLR8R's friends, associates, and freelance writers came out to knock back a few cold ones with the crew. Here are some snapshots that tell part of the story.



Shotgun wedding: XLR8R Publisher Andrew Smith (left) and publicist Jon Berry soak the NYC party in beer.



Amalgam Media VP Michael Prommer and journalist James Friedman in NYC.



Photographers Jessica Miller and Chris Woodcock with crazy drunk guy in LA.



Zion of Zion I, Jonah Sharp, Black of Blaktronics and Amp Live of Zion I in SF.



Photographer Zen Sekizawa, Mark of X-Large, Dublab's Frosty and artist Rory Wilson in LA.



Journalist Brian Paul and creative director David Weissberg in NYC.



Cool Beans: No, literally.

CONTROLLER FREAKS

When we're not getting carpal tunnel from typing too much, we're getting carpal tunnel from spending hours in front of our videogame consoles. And we're not alone: the producers and DJs we cover have proven to be similarly obsessed with games, from *Grand Theft Auto* to *Madden NFL 2003* to *Parappa the Rapper*. We peeled our bug eyes away from the screen long enough to deliver you this guide to what's great in the gaming world this holiday season.

ROCK HARDER

balls to pull it off properly, you'll reap the rewards. This has been the success formula behind Rockstar Games, leading the charge with the *Grand Theft Auto* franchise—their *Vice City* installment has sold the most copies of any video game in history. Simultaneously envied and frowned upon by their competitors, Rockstar is considered the black sheep of their industry, frequently giving the old “fuck you” to any sort of standard practice. If you hang with their crew, you soon realize that it's hard drinking, loud music and long hours in both clubs and the office that make it all work. Case in point: *Vice City*'s perfectly timed '80s revival theme (complete with a massive box set of licensed tunes), totally in sync with what was influencing the bleeding edge of streetwear fashionistas and new wave micro-groups.

The two big holiday releases from this rabble of rude-boy renegades are *Max Payne 2* and *Manhunt*. *Max Payne 2*, sequel to the original dark detective game, sports both beefier graphics and more cinematic-style gameplay than its predecessor. Slow-motion action sequences contribute greatly to this aesthetic, as gun battles, explosions and flying bodies stop in mid-air, *Matrix*-like, across the screen. How did Rockstar do it? *Payne 2* was put together using a full-on Hollywood-style stunt crew, motion capture techniques and voice-overs.

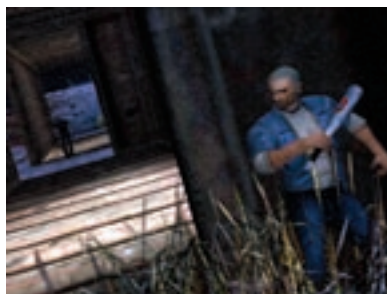
Going from film noir to just plain evil, *Manhunt* is set in an America where civilization has degraded into pure violence. Made by the developers behind the *Grand Theft* series, there's no humor in this gloomy world, where the point is to run for your life. This reversal of the classic gameplay—where you are superhuman and capable of killing thousands of bad guys—makes *Manhunt* a more roughneck ride. *Andrew Smith*
www.rockstargames.com

ROCKSTAR GAMES' TOP TEN ALBUMS, COURTESY OF LORD SWEENEY

1. Zongamin *Zongamin* (XL)
2. Outkast *Speakerboxxx/The Love Below* (Arista)
3. LFO *Sheath* (Warp)
4. Diplodocus & Low Budget *Hollertronix: Never Scared* (Money Studies)

5. Carl Craig *Tres Demented* (Planet E)
6. The Rapture *Echoes* (DFA)
7. Manitoba *Up In Flames* (Leaf)
8. Mu *Afro Finger and Gel* (Tigersushi)
9. Plaid *Parts In The Post* (Peacefrog)
10. !!! *Me and Giuliani Down By The Schoolyard* (Touch & Go)

It's been proven time and time again that if you've got an original idea and enough veracity and



Far left image from *Max Payne 2*; all other images this page from *Manhunt*

In your tough-guy dreams, you manhandle prostitutes, beat down gang members, and show the city streets who's boss. And then you wake up and you're just a wuss in Batman pajamas. No need to cry. Hot on the heels of that other vice-filled game comes *True Crime: Streets of LA* (PS2/Xbox/Gamecube, Activision; \$49.95), which places you in the role of Nick Kang, an LA cop assigned to break up the Chinese and Russian mafias in the town that law forgot. Cruise through the city streets on a series of missions, learning new martial arts and driving maneuvers while you bust drug dealers and bump the soundtrack, which features tracks from famous West Coasters like Snoop, E-40 and Kam. *True Crime* features a rather painstaking rendering of the Westside, so we cornered lead city designer Micah Linton and shook him down for information on four LA landmarks you'll find in the game. *Tyra Bangs*



CRIME PAYS

1. PINK'S HOT DOG STAND

(709 N. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles)
Since 1939, Pink's has been one of the most famous hot dog stands in the country. Located in Hollywood, it's the hang-out for movie stars, well-known dignitaries, musicians, businessmen, housewives...even school children. People from all walks of life stand in line all hours of the day and night. It is an LA icon.



round the “ship.” Although it was once a prime retail location, today it serves as a quiet office complex.

2. CROSSROADS OF THE WORLD (OFFICE BUILDING)

(6671 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood)
Built in 1936, Crossroads of the World was once hailed as “L.A.'s first modern shopping mall.” The centerpiece building of the project resembles a miniature ocean liner—an Art Deco facade complete with portholes, railings, life preservers and decks—flanked by an outdoor village of small, European-style bungalows that sur-



3. PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER (SHOWROOMS, MUSEUM)

(8687 Melrose Ave., West Hollywood)
We chose the Pacific Design Center for the sheer uniqueness of the building. With two large geometric shapes—one in blue and one in green—the Pacific Design Center is visible from a distance and creates quite an interesting sight while cruising the streets of LA.



4. STAPLES CENTER (SPORTS COMPLEX)

(1111 S. Figueroa St., Los Angeles)
Home to the LA Kings, Lakers and Clippers, this area was constructed in 1999 and has since grown quickly to become one of the most important sites in downtown Los Angeles. The building's unique architecture makes it easily recognizable, and it is a must-have in any recreation of Los Angeles.



THINKING INSIDE THE BOX

Few people know that the Microsoft Xbox is actually a trumped-up PC, and with a little tweaking here and a little soldering there, it can be used as a server, all-in-one media player, or a vehicle for playing homemade games. In *Hacking the Xbox* (softcover, No Starch Press; \$24.99), technology fiend Andrew “Bunnie” Huang deconstructs a variety of hacks—from novice shit like replacing the LED light to significantly more complex reverse engineering. We recently sat down with Bunnie to find out what's runnin' in the console hacking community. *Vivian Host*

XLR8R: How did you get the nickname Bunnie?

Andrew Huang: In *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* there's a little bunny with sharp teeth that attacks the knights. My friends got a kick out of calling me “Bunnie” after that.

XLR8R: What are some of your favorite hacks of the last few years?

AH: I really like the stuff that involves classic videogames—people that retrofit PCs into classic arcade game-style consoles. It's a hack that has some charm to it. They get an old arcade machine where the circuit boards are broken and they replace the tube, hook up a keyboard, and fire up some old game simulators like *Frogger* or *Space Invaders*.

XLR8R: What are the most realistic uses for a hacked Xbox?

AH: In countries where technology is not as cheap and available, they use the Xbox to answer emails. In some places, like South America, they're retrofitting them to be web servers and public machines. In the US, where you can buy a powerful PC for almost nothing, the most compelling application outside of gaming is as a media center. It's the right size, and it has the right ports, and it fits under your TV. You can play MP3s on it, and you can listen to Internet radio.

XLR8R: Are you still interested in hacking the Xbox?

AH: I'm more into interesting peripherals, like the engine-control units of cars, which are becoming more sophisticated. You can program the ECU to get 10-20% more power, which I think will become popular with the car modification market. Printer manufacturers have started to lock into their own-brand ink cartridges using security chips; hackers are creating third-party ink cartridges that look like the original unit, and then reprogramming the printer so it recognizes the cheaper cartridges.

XLR8R: What's going on with the console market in other parts of the world?

AH: In Taiwan, they're refitting the Xbox with multi-gigahertz Pentium processors. They've redecorated the box and spray-painted the outside, and it has a 120G hard drive that can store tons of games and MP3s and you get better frame rates against your friends. It's amazing what they have for the enthusiasts in these hardcore markets. In the US, there's a huge gulf between the two coasts—every time you make a technological change, you have to take that into account. Somewhere like South Korea is small enough that you can make any infrastructure change you want. The whole population moves together.

If you're looking to talk directly to the geeks, you can find them at www.xboxhacker.net.

Also check www.hackingthebox.com.

VOODOO VINCE (Xbox, Microsoft/Beep Industries; \$39.95)

As someone who usually hates all cartoon games, I admit this is one I'd actually wrestle young kids for. An immaculate 3-D world awash in mel-low Southern jazz is the domain of *Voodoo Vince*, the voodoo doll. Hurt yourself and you kill the bad guys as you flop and plop through the streets of a post-apocolytic New Orleans. Once accustomed to the surreal environments and vertigo-inducing movement, Vince travels from level to level solving brain-and agility-taxing puzzles. The animation is impressive, some of the best for the console, and artistically the scenes and creatures are quite creatively conceived, giving the constant impression that you're fighting off the effects of a slightly suspicious Cajun dinner. *Andrew Smith*

www.beepindustries.com

Ratings:

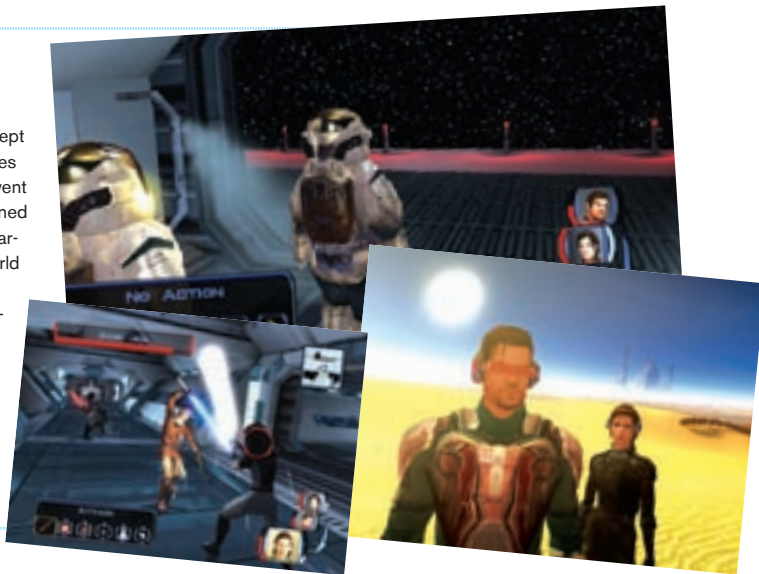


STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC (PS2/Xbox, LucasArts; \$49.95)

Say you were one of those kids that had a few *Star Wars* figures and played Dungeons and Dragons with your buddies when you were 14; then you grew up, kept playing D&D, and started collecting action figures, too. During this time, video games were always a constant, but it wasn't until a little later that you had a relapse and went apeshit for them. This is the type of person *Knights of the Old Republic* was designed for. It allows you to build your own character, as well as pick your personality, appearance, and various levels of strength, intelligence, etc. Now imagine yourself in a world controlled by the evil Sith. Move your man around, collecting party members, gaining experience points and interacting with the other characters in choose-your-own-adventure-style mini-movies. From lightsabers to Wookies to protocol droids, this game has it all. It's even better than dressing up like a Klingon. *Andrew Smith*

www.lucasarts.com

Rating:



KILL SWITCH (PS2/Xbox, Namco; \$49.99)

Disclaimer: I had a chance to meet two of the developers, and we chatted about how this game was put together and what exactly made it unique. Firmly classified in the storm-in-there-and-shoot-the-shit-out-of-them genre, *K.S* has some surprisingly realistic combat movement unhampered by ridiculous controller combinations. The creators have sadly forsaken bloodshed for a teen rating, but the game has an amazingly real-world feel that makes up for it. In most games of this genre you have to pop out from behind an obstacle to fire at your enemies, risking mutilation. In *Kill Switch*, if you're heavily under attack, you can just pop your gun out, spray wildly like an episode of the *A-Team* and hope you get lucky. Pretty challenging from the start, so if you like to wreck shit, you'll enjoy this one. *Andrew Smith*

www.killswitch.com

Ratings:



NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND (PS2/Xbox, EA Games; \$49.99)

Really good graphics and a powerful sense of velocity make this newest chapter in the *Need for Speed* street racing series an addictive must-have. I seriously cracked out on this newest version, staying up late so I could modify my car with all sorts of turbo chargers and nutty-looking spoilers. You can choose from 20 real-world cars, all licensed by EA for use in the game, and trick them out with hundreds of mods and paint jobs. Play in a variety of modes, including a story-driven multitude of lev-

els, arcade-style street-circuit racing or, my favorite, the drag race. When drag racing, you basically just floor it in a straight line, swerving every so

often to avoid things like fellow competitors, oncoming cars and trains. Then hit the nitrous fuel injector, which not only blasts the car forward, but also makes the screen go blurry and turns the city lights into streaks that fly past. Very, very fun. *Andrew Smith*

www.needforspeed.com

Rating:



XLR8R'S VIDEO GAME RATING KEY:

- = Girl Friendly
- = Stony
- = Geek Fest
- = Ultra-Violent
- = High Anxiety

Ratings illustrations by Kenny Dale

FEATURING DANCE HITS BY:
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IAN VAN DAHL
FEAT. MARSHA
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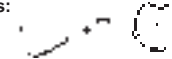
GF GAMEFLY
rent smart. play harder.



SIMPSONS HIT AND RUN (PS2/Xbox, Vivendi Universal; \$49.99)

In a classic Simpsons double-entendre truly worthy of the series' best laughs, tentacled aliens Kudos and Kodons have plotted to turn Springfield into the ultimate intergalactic reality TV show. While past Simpsons video game translations have fallen short, *Simpsons Hit and Run* has surprising staying power. Race through Springfield as one of your favorite Simpsons characters. Roam on foot to investigate crop circles and trace the source of glowing green goop. Fifty wacky missions make for extensive single-player gaming, and multiplayer free-for-alls ensure competitive laughs. Excellent 3-D cartoon graphics and a hilarious story penned by *The Simpsons* writers and voiced by the TV cast also make this trip through bizarre Springfield a definite standout. *Thomas Kelley*

Ratings:



TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND (THUG)
(PS2/Xbox, Activision; \$49.99)

The latest in the Tony Hawk series comes with some ultra-dope new features. You no longer play as the pros, but rather yourself: a wee grommet trying to make it in the skate scene. You can now jump off your skateboard, climb buildings and even drive cars! *THUG* also provides a lot more customization options compared to earlier installments. If you own a PS2 you can now upload a picture online and create a skater with your own face. You can also originate your own tricks (lots of fun!), as well as build skate parks and boards. Prepare for little sleep and a pair of very sore thumbs. Fanfuckingspazmic! *Kjetil Sagstad*

Rating:



RPG MAKER 2 (PS2, Agetec; \$49.99)

Many believe indulgence in role-playing games like Dungeons & Dragons to be a big fat fucking waste of time. But for the geeks who love them, RPGs are a way to subvert reality, allying analytical thinking and creativity under one roof in the service of fun. *RPG Maker 2* ushers in a new phase in building secondary worlds. With a host of tools at your fingertips you can create vast continents, name rivers and forests, build towers brick by brick, design characters, and basically write an original choose-your-own-adventure. Like a beaver, you will build your dam, admire it, then use it. Retired Dungeon Masters, Middle Earthlings and Thomas Guide cartographers need only apply. *Thomas Kelley*

Rating:



QUICKIE:

EYE TOY (Sony; \$49.99) is a new gizmo for Playstation that incorporates a USB camera, allowing you to become the "star" of 12 purpose-built games (which come with the device) and also to record your own 60-second personal video messages. Right now, the screen looks a bit like you're in one of those Japanese sticker photo booths, but future applications will include the ability to paste an actual picture of your face onto your favorite PS2 character. *Tyra Bangs*

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION MAX 2 (PS2, Konami; \$39.99, \$59.99 w/dance mat)

Besides functioning as either an effective Wade Robson Project training program for kids or a daycare center for candy ravers, *DDR Max 2* is an infectious party game for contemporary women and men who aren't afraid to Flashdance. The point of the game? Adopt killer dance moves and follow the flashing patterns with your footloose steps on a dance mat controller. Then, create your own dance steps and show your stuff off in the ultimate dance-a-thon. Over 65 tracks from Crystal Method, Dirty Vegas, Kylie Minogue and K.C. and the Sunshine Band provide inspiration. Alcohol sold separately. *Thomas Kelley*

Ratings:



Thomas Kelley is a staff member at www.gamefly.com.



TRUE GRIT

SOME SAY THEY'RE THE GREATEST TO EVER PLAY THE GAME. WITH SEVEN YEARS AND UNTOLD ANTHEMS UNDER THEIR COLLECTIVE BELTS, LONDON'S TRUE PLAYAZ ORGANIZATION KEEPS DRUM & BASS CULTURE ALIVE WHILE STOKING FANS WITH THEIR TRADEMARK BRAND OF DANCEFLOOR BEATDOWN. WE SAT DOWN WITH HYPE, ZINC, PASCAL AND HAZARD TO FIND OUT WHAT KEEPS THESE VETERAN JUNGLISTS TICKING.

WORDS VIVIAN HOST
IMAGES TOM OLDHAM

"I'M
NOT INTO
TRENDY.
I'M
NOT INTO
PRETTY."

DJ Hype is talking about his label's record sleeves, but he could well be laying down the philosophy of True Playaz. Since 1996, True Playaz—an organization that also includes DJ/producers Zinc, Pascal, and new recruit Hazard—has been keeping the faith of drum & bass music alive; dodging fads, flashy promotion, and major label pressures while ardently pushing dancefloor-driven drum & bass to the vinyl junkies of the world.

I meet the True Playaz camp, one-by-one, on a hot Saturday evening in August. They're in various stages of gearing up for their monthly night at Fabric in London, and they're in a good mood. The weather's nice by English standards, they're on their home turf (in the city that birthed jungle), and by 9PM the queue is already heaving with drum & bass fans waiting to spend the next six hours giving it up on the dancefloor. It's a scene guaranteed to make the mainstream press eat their proclamations that drum & bass is dead.

ZINC: THE LAB TECHNICIAN

Zinc, who has been burnt by the English press in the past, is wary of being interviewed, but consents in the name of *Faster*, his new album on Polydor. The record runs the gamut from UK garage to searing drum & bass as it gradually ramps up



"HYPE ALWAYS TAKES THE PISS, SAYING 'NOBODY EVER LISTENS TO THAT.'"

"I DON'T EVER WANT TO BE A POP ACT OR A CROSSOVER."

"IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT MAKING MUSIC & COLLECTING THE MONEY, YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE A LAUGH AS WELL."

"I JUST WANT TO DO MELLOW STUFF IN THE STUDIO."

"WHETHER YOU WANT MY ADVICE OR NOT, I WILL GIVE IT."

"I'M HAPPY THAT I'M NOT MEDIA-MADE."



True Playaz (from left): Pascal, Zinc, Hazard and Hype

from 90 to 170 bpm. It's a testament to why Zinc is the camp's silent but deadly weapon: he's able to conjure up a variety of tempos and moods but never loses focus on the deep, crisp breaks that are his trademark.

Zinc's tracks are very much a reflection of his personality: they're direct and uncluttered, yet meticulously structured. "I don't know if it comes across in the tunes, but I'm very specific," he notes. "Every hi-hat has got to be exactly here. I do an edit and it will take two hours. Hype always takes the piss, saying, 'Nobody ever listens to that!' But it's the subtle details in things that I'm usually interested in."

For the most part, Zinc keeps his head in the studio, popping out for worldwide DJ gigs and to help run his Bingo imprint, which has been setting the pace for dark and rumbling breakbeat garage since 2000. "I would just be in the studio all the time if I could be," he says, lighting up. "I just love it. Last night, I was meant to go somewhere with friends and I [told them], 'I've got to go now. I have to go to the studio.' They're like, 'What's the matter with you?' But I went there and I made half a tune. It's not finished, but it's good enough to cut for tonight!"

HYPE: ORIGINAL JUNGLIST

As Zinc whizzes off to a gig in Birmingham in his Audi TT, I rendezvous with a record bag-toting Hype, who's gearing up to play the midnight set. Hype is the backbone of True Playaz, having come up with the concept after RCA offered him a record deal. "At the time, I didn't really want to be a solo artist," he says. "So we did a collaboration and I hid amongst them two. I love DJ'ing and I love the limelight of being a DJ, but I don't ever want to be a pop act or a crossover. I'm so anti-commercial. The plan was to have True Playaz on the underground and the RCA label on the mainstream, and the two would run concurrent, which they did. But then RCA wanted a pop hit, and I was like, 'We're not going to do that.' I'm not a band. I'm on tour 365 days of the year, so I don't really have to be a live act."

Hype wasn't gutted when the major label deal didn't work out, since True Playaz still had plenty of success in the underground. "I'm happy that I'm not media-made," he says. "Some bands aren't good and the media big them up, and the media can chop them down straightaway afterwards. I wouldn't say I'm unbreakable, but I'm more established with what I do, and I do it at my own pace."

Hype has been setting the pace since the early '80s. He fell in love with ska at the age of 11, and by 14 he was the selector for the Shut Up and Dance sound system, who used to promote and play at renegade parties in derelict houses around Hackney. In 1990, he made his first break into rave music, co-producing The Scientist's "The Exorcist." With its mix of techno and sped-up hip-hop breaks, it may establish Hype as one of the first to develop the fusion that would eventually become known as jungle.

Subsequently, Hype went on to record numerous anthems ("The Chopper," "Roll The Beats," "R.I.P. Remix") for Suburban Base before defecting to start his own Ganja imprint in 1994. Musically and visually, Ganja ripped a page from Dr. Dre's *The Chronic* aesthetic, featuring hip-hop-flavored drum & bounce tracks that continue to get played by everyone from techno hippies to hardcore ragga lovers. Featuring such anthems as Zinc's "Super Sharp Shooter" and Hype's "Peace, Love and Unity," Ganja is—much like Hype—the older, more maniacal uncle of the True Playaz imprint.

Though Hype is known for speaking his mind—"Whether you want my advice or not, I will give it," he says with a sarcastic grin—he says he's become a little bit less fiery and more organized at the age of 35. He says he misses the days when making a track was as simple as "smoking a spliff, going in the studio and working on a vibe," but there's more at stake these days. He has two kids to support, and a

position to maintain at the top of a scene dominated by young upstart producers.

"This is what I'm good at, and this is what I'm known for," he says. "This is something that's real to me. And as long as you look at the history of this music, whether you think I'm good or shit, I'm there. I can meet someone who is 35 or 40 who used to hear me 10 years ago, or I can meet someone who is 16 and heard me last week. If I drop dead tomorrow, my legacy is there."

PASCAL: SMOOTH OPERATOR

As Hype rushes off to attend to the dancefloor—whose feedback is more important to him than that of his peers—Pascal takes a seat. The most low-key of this foursome is crucial to the bedrock of the organization: he's been organizing Hype's affairs since the early days, having consistently run record labels (Face Records, Frontline, Ganja and now Playaz) since the early '90s. Pascal was and is a staunch hip-hop head who bumps 50 Cent and Snoop Dogg more often than Bad Company or LTJ Bukem. "I found out early on that being a white English guy in the hip-hop scene wasn't going to get me anywhere in music," he says of his introduction to jungle. "With the introduction of breakbeats and hip-hop samples into D&B back then, that was my little link."

Pascal was most prolific in the mid-'90s, when his Frontline label was at its peak and he had produced a string of burners, from darkside anthem "Johnny" (as Johnny Jungle) to his classic "P-Funk Era." These days, he concentrates more on running True Playaz and doing all the crew's graphic design. Production-wise, he's conflicted. "I've got Hype in one ear shouting, 'You need to do more dancefloor tunes,' and then I just want to do mellow stuff in the studio," he says. The result is Frontline going in a more liquid funk direction, while Pascal reserves the tear-outs for TP.

One of the strengths of True Playaz is that all the crew members have their own labels, which raises their individual and collective profiles while giving them individual outlets for their pet sounds. Their other strength, oddly, is their vastly different personalities. Pascal, Zinc and Hazard are content to let Hype be the outspoken frontman—they seem to be relieved to have such an honest and down-to-earth, if sometimes indelicate, spokesperson.

HAZZARD: THE NEW BLOOD

Which brings us to Hazard, the new blood of the collective. Realizing that three True Playaz were spread too thin, Hype quickly swooped Hazard after hearing his jumpy, banging rollers, notably "Number 6" on Formation. Hazard has few former associations, making him the perfectly apolitical candidate for Playadom.

He may be bluffing, but he seems blasé about his fame when I talk to him on the phone. He says his friends are more excited about his signing than he is, although he's relieved to have ditched his record store job. Hazard's content to concentrate on making tunes—like all True Playaz, he prefers to work solo—and running his label Radius, which aims to introduce other up-and-coming artists from the UK Midlands. Hazard's also got a cheeky sense of humor, and you'll often find him on the dancefloor raving after DJ sets. "It's not just about making music and collecting the money," he explains. "You've got to have a laugh as well."

"I thought it would be good to give someone a new foot in the door and that eases the pressure on the three of us," says Hype of Hazard's signing. "And before even his first EP was out, he was really established. It's good to see that I could bring in someone in and they could do well. I like helping people, and I've always done it. I'm not a greedy person. I give free advice to anyone who bloody doesn't ask me. That's the way I am."

www.trueplayaz.co.uk

TRUE PLAYAZ TOP TEN PLAYS

The Exorcist: The Bee (Kickin')
Hype and partner Pure Science (who now makes techno) struck it big with this poinging 1990 rave anthem.

Remarc: R.I.P. (Hype Rmx) (Suburban Base)
From Hype's days at seminal jungle label Suburban Bass, this tune's roughneck ragga chat and insane drops make dancers go mental.

Zinc: Super Sharp Shooter (Ganja)
The S...the U...the P, the E, the R. The hip-hop-flavored jump-up anthem that put Zinc on the map.

Mr. Vegas: Heads High (Hype Rmx) (white)
One of Hype's famous exclusives that you can only hear during his DJ sets. Wicked dancehall bad-man vocals over beats that pop and lock.

Zinc: Casino Royale (True Playaz)
Loopy loops and boinging pads create a bouncy, upbeat roller that's the ultimate summer soundtrack.

Johnny Jungle: Johnny (Suburban Base)
A darkside classic from Pascal, complete with sick low-end, eerie atmospherics, and a girl screaming, "Johnny, help meeee!" Remixed and re-mixed by Origin Unknown, Dillinja and Bad Company.

Pascal: P-Funk Era (Frontline)
Pascal ushers in a new jump-up era, mixing *The Chronic*-style South Central funk stabs with hip-hop vibes. Essential (and recently remixed by Moving Fusion).

Zinc: ?ugees or Not (white)
Still a dancefloor staple, Lauryn Hill's trademark chorus soundclashes with a speedball of classic jungle breaks and bass. Rewind and come again!

DJ Zinc: 138 Trek (Bingo)
Zinc continually rips the scene a new one with bouncing breakbeat garage stormers on his Bingo label. This is the track that kicked it all off.

Hazard: Rubber Chicken (True Playaz)
Classical music does the booty hop with a ridiculously bouncy bassline and crazy bass buildups, creating a track that forces the dancefloor to move.

FINE WEAVE

"WE'RE NOT A FUCKING TRADE FAIR. IT'S A DISCO AND WE PLAY MUSIC."



AGAINST THE TIDE OF ENDLESS GENERIC CLUB NIGHTS RISES FABRIC, THE FOUR-YEAR-OLD BRITISH WAREHOUSE VENUE THAT'S NEITHER A "SUPERCLUB" NOR A DODGY PUB, BUT STILL MANAGES TO PROGRAM THE WORLD'S BEST UNDERGROUND MUSIC EVERY WEEKEND.

**WORDS VIVIAN HOST
IMAGES TOM OLDHAM**

It's easy to get lost in Fabric. Even after repeated trips, the London club always feels new again, if only because navigating its labyrinthine hallways, catwalks, and four vastly different rooms is a continual challenge. By all accounts, owner Keith Reilly has planned it this way. A club promoter since 1981, he knows that the kiss of death comes when punters become too comfortable, when the experience of going out becomes anything less than unpredictable.

After spending four nights in a row at Fabric, you'd be hard pressed to define its signature crowd. The True Playaz night is rammed to the gills with barely legal junglists sweating it out on the dancefloor and flashing lighters in DJ Hype's face, their eyes barely visible above the DJ booth. The launch of the recent UNKLE album brings through James Lavelle's acolytes: all Bathing Ape t-shirts, fashionable haircuts and respectful swaying; in the VIP room, skaters, It girls and Pulp's

“WHAT ON EARTH GAVE YOU THE FUCKING IDEA THAT WE WANT TO PUT OUR NAME ON THE BACK OF A LORRY AND RUN IT 'ROUND THE LEEDS TOWN CENTER?”



Fabric's Keith Reilly (left) and Steve Blonde



Jarvis Cocker pop champagne. Fabric's no stranger to the bridge & tunnel crowd either. A Saturday night featuring Swayzak and Perlon Records' Pantytect draws weekend clubbers by the droves—you could swear for a second that you're in an Italian disco. When one of the DJs throws down New Order's "Bizarre Love Triangle," the office girls go instantly wild.

And that's just the main rooms. The second room—which feels less like a club than a warehouse rave—is darkness, lasers and strobes, with music ranging from Detroit techno to San Francisco house to bleepy UK garage. A third room has the trapping of an intimate bar, albeit one that's hosted such names as Bent and Dizzeze Rascal.

This scene is a far cry from the ones at mega-clubs like Ministry of Sound, Pacha and Cream, where a "been there, done that, bought the t-shirt" mentality brings in hordes of people eager to soak up a signature sound or experience. The only thing signature about Fabric's sound seems to be its purpose-built sound system, through which the stomach-churning lows of drum & bass sound just as crisp and effective as the twinkling highs of tech house. "We've put that as a priority and we've sacrificed other things for it," confesses Reilly. "[The club] is not that well-appointed, the fixtures and things. We've spent everything on the sound system."

Fabric isn't all that different from the warehouses of Reilly's youth. A former warehouse manager, he spent the late '80s and early '90s tracking down disused spaces, throwing parties in them, trashing them, and then renting them out to another rave promoter to do the same thing the next weekend. (Reilly's brother Billy took the hobby one step further, and is now the owner of London clubs The Cross, Pasha and Bagley's.) Though the idea for Fabric was conceived in the early '90s, the club didn't get off the ground until 1999, after years of both aborted attempts on other spaces and licensing hassles. In October, Fabric celebrated a happy fourth anniversary: the company had recently settle a protracted lawsuit with a silent partner who wanted to pull the organization in more commercial directions, and they were con-

tinuing their successful mixed CD series, which has included discs by Grooverider, Howie B and Slam, and recently Bugz in the Attic and Kompakt's Michael Mayer.

Reilly contends that it's been easy to maintain Fabric's underground music policy, but keeping the club from mainstream marketing associations and politics hasn't been so simple. "You just get a torrent of bullshit from manufacturers and artists," he fumes. "How many of the big-name artists have we had run-ins with just because they can't have a fucking gig down here? They have to have their finger in every pie. They can't let anyone else have one fucking thing and leave it alone. We're not a fucking trade fair. It's a disco and we play music, and if we try harder not to concentrate on that [other] stuff then we don't get distracted and we don't get distorted."

To that end, Fabric hasn't pursued advertising streams from gear companies, or started a clothing line, or even toured. "How many times did I have to tell [party organizer] Eddie Gordon that we don't want to do the [British] Love Parade?" contends Reilly. "In the end, I just said, 'What on Earth gave you the fucking idea that we want to put our name on the back of a lorry and run it 'round the Leeds town center?' I don't see the point of that kind of stuff, just like I don't see the point of hanging [a] Fabric [sign] above the door. [And touring the club] is just like [taking] Canada to China. It's Fabric and it's here."

"People don't necessarily have an affinity to the word 'Fabric,'" explains promotions head Steve Blonde. "They have an affinity to this space and the environment, and what it's like here on a Friday or Saturday night. And the moment you've got a Fabric DJ and a Fabric banner and a tour, that's not Fabric, and they're not going to feel that affinity."

"I just want Fabric to be what it is," concurs Reilly. "It's a disco. It doesn't have to be the best in the world, the biggest in the world—it's so irrelevant to me. All that matters is the people in there—the experience they've had, the way we've treated them, the music that we've played, and if we've given them a good night out."®

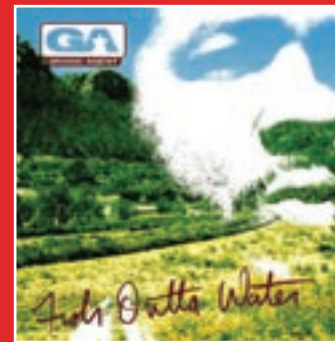
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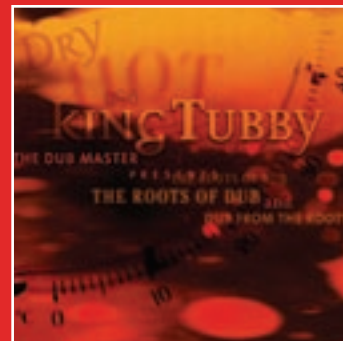


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Fish Outta Water Remixes
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BHANGRA REVO- LUTION

AS SOUTH ASIAN DANCE MUSIC POPS UP EVERYWHERE—FROM BBC RADIO PROGRAMS TO JAY-Z TRACKS—THE REAL REVOLUTION IS BREWING IN BRITAIN'S CITIES. DESI BEATS—A HARD-STEPPING CULTURE CLASH WHERE UK BHANGRA MUSIC MEETS 2-STEP, DRUM & BASS, R&B AND HIP-HOP—HAS BECOME THE SOUND OF OUR YOUNG CENTURY. HERE'S HOW BHANGRA WENT FROM FARMER'S MUSIC TO THE TOP OF THE POPS.

**WORDS DAVE STELFOX
IMAGES ABIGAIL'S PARTY**

Walk the outer reaches of any major metropolitan center and it feels like you're wandering through several different worlds. Imperialism, global economics and immigration have all combined to create a brand new social map. Disparate communities abut one another, and bring their separate cultures to the urban mix, blending, clashing and often yielding startling results.

This kind of convergence has resulted in the new wave of South Asian music coming from the UK. By fusing traditional rhythms with rap, R&B, 2-step garage and a dose of sound-system savvy, a new generation of producers, DJs and artists are turning hip-hop's recent obsession with Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi beats and voices on its head.

For both the vast majority of Anglo-Asians and a diverse spectrum of other fans, South Asian music is much more than a convenient source of "exotic" samples. Configured as bhangra, this music represents a very real, self-sufficient force at the forefront of British dance music. In direct contrast to the more visible "Asian Underground" movement of the late 1990s spearheaded by percussionist Talvin Singh, British bhangra is rooted in the predominantly working-class South Asian diaspora.

Bhangra has neither courted the media nor attempted to ingratiate itself with the middlebrow market. As a result, the genre operates rather like dancehall reggae does within the Caribbean community—as a vibrant, massively popular alternative mainstream style that comes complete with its own infrastructure of specialist record shops, radio shows and parties.

However, for proof of the music's commercial potential, one need only look to the success of Britain's Panjabi MC and his pivotal hit "Mundian To Bach Ke" (later to become Jay-Z collaboration "Beware Of The Boys"). Indeed, this track—and the work of crews such as London's BBC 1Xtra radio stars Panjabi Hit Squad, Leeds production team Rhythm Dhol Bass DJs and Glasgow DJ/production crew Tigerstyle—can be seen as the logical conclusion of many long years of interplay between urban music and South Asian youth culture.

**"THIS
ISN'T MUSIC
FOR
MIDDLE-AGED
PEOPLE
TO STROKE
THEIR
CHINS TO."**





"THERE AREN'T MANY OF THOSE LONG, CLASSICAL-STYLE INTROS THAT YOU'LL HEAR IN MUSIC BY SOMEONE LIKE TALVIN SINGH. IT'S MUCH MORE STRAIGHT TO THE POINT."

LEADERS OF THE NEW SCHOOL

Bhangra began as a rough-hewn style of folk music specific to northern India's Punjab region. It's commonly played around harvest season and at wedding celebrations, and was later adopted by the children of British Panjabi immigrants as general-purpose party music, incorporating certain aspects of Western pop and electronic music production. As the music wove its way into Britain's cultural fabric, it became alternately referred to as "desi beats" (*desi* being a Hindi word that roughly translates as "native," in much the same way Jamaicans use the word "yard").

Although songs in the genre typically include vocals and a number of other instruments, bhangra's heartbeat is the *dhol*, the thunderous, multi-toned drum from which northern English collective Rhythm Dhol Bass takes part of its name. Despite being hailed by one British style magazine as "The Asian So Solid Crew," RDB is (in contrast to the sprawling UK garage posse) a close-knit family affair with a core membership made up of Sikh brothers Kuly, Manj and Surj Singh.

At 26, Kuly is the oldest member, and often finds himself acting as RDB's spokesman—a role he plays well with his friendly demeanor. He explains how the group's distinctive style of production and composition evolved: "We all grew up in Bradford, Yorkshire, so we've always listened to all sorts of things—from hip-hop to dancehall and [UK] garage—alongside bhangra. They're all a big part of the RDB sound."

"Although bhangra was originally folk music played by farmers for people who worked in fields, it translates and mixes really well with modern urban music, probably because it's simple and very immediate. It's made for dancing, so there aren't many of those long, classical-style intros that you'll hear in music by someone like Talvin Singh. It's much more straight to the point. The songs get going really quickly and are full of rhythm and life."

Bhangra fan Hermeet Chadha, a staff member on BBC Radio 1's John Peel show, agrees. "This isn't music for middle-aged people to stroke their chins or dance in a mystical fashion to. Bhangra is all about fun. The parties—which were, in the past, often held in the middle of the afternoon so the kids' parents would let them come—are packed. When the music starts up, everyone goes absolutely nuts!"

Having released their second artist album, *Unstoppable*—the follow-up to 2001's *Rhythm Dhol Bass* and 2002's "Sounds Of The North" EP—on their own Untouchables imprint in October, the members of RDB are glad to see bhangra draw widespread interest and break out of its own scene.

Kuly continues: "Bhangra began as Panjabi music and was mostly identified with Sikh people. But as time has gone on it's become, if you like, the sound of [South] Asian youth. People from all over have taken it to heart—Hindu, Muslim, whatever. I mean, it doesn't matter where people are from or what religion they are if they enjoy what we do. The main thing is that there's obviously a very strong Indian element in our music, and that appeals to Indian people across the board, and a lot of others, too. The urban influences make sense because that's also part of our lives. We've just brought all the things we love together in our own way."

Kuly's younger brother Surj, 24, adds: "It's about time! I can only think that this will help both bhangra and music in general to grow. More than anything else, I want all kinds of different people to be out there appreciating what we do."

RDB runs a tight ship, making the most of their respective skills. Kuly oversees the UK production operation from the group's studio in Leeds, while Manj, 25, creates the beats from his home in Toronto, Ontario. The team has also produced numerous albums and singles for other artists and created tracks for several motion pictures.

Meanwhile, Surj heads the acclaimed RDB roadshow. As he says: "When people come to one of our performances, they really get something special: the most cutting-edge music, spectacular singing performances, MCing, internationally acclaimed live Indian drummers, explosions, light shows—all with that magic RDB twist."

BBC Radio 1 DJ Bobby Friction calls RDB "the most consistently challenging and prolific artists [in] the British [South] Asian music scene," and maintains that they have "the vision and tenacity to make it into the mainstream." But although such acceptance would be welcome, it's in no way necessary for the burgeoning desi scene to keep climbing.

SUSTAINED SELF-SUFFICIENCY

As bhangra has evolved from India's countryside to Britain's inner cities, it's always maintained its personality and heritage via a strong sense of individuality and self-reliance. Those in search of an ideal model of independent label management could do worse than look to RDB.

Kuly says: "As far as sales go, things are really good, because we run everything connected with the business ourselves, from the design of the CD covers to our website and making our own videos. We have complete control. Basically, we know where to put our records. We've sold thousands—and that's mostly through dodgy Indian CD shops! We've never really bothered with your massive megastores in the middle of town, and we're still getting our music out to a lot of fans."

"But I think we'll see a lot more Indian music getting the success it deserves now because record companies are finally taking notice of the fact that there's a huge [South] Asian audience out there. It's all down to what I call the power of the brown pound!"

DJ Markie Mark, 29, of BBC Radio 1Xtra residents Panjabi Hit Squad wholly concurs. "It's totally feasible for the [South] Asian scene to throw up a lot more Top 10 records if you're just talking about the amount of music sold. The only problem is the shops where people go to buy this sort of stuff aren't chart-registered, so the music doesn't get that kind of exposure."

"That's why 'Mundian To Bach Ke' was such an important record. It came out in 1998 and took its time getting [into the charts], but ended up being a massive hit in the UK and Europe, and went on to form the base of the Jay-Z track, too. That showed people what this music can do and the potential it has."

With its recently signed deal with Def Jam and remixes for artists like Ashanti, Keith Murray and Mariah Carey, Panjabi Hit Squad illustrates bhangra's viability. The crew has released two compilations—*The Streets* and *Desi Beats*, the latter a companion to their weekly BBC 1Xtra show—on Def Jam UK, and is now gearing up for a debut artist album, due out early in 2004.

Mark—a white guy raised in one of North London's predominantly South Asian districts who's been passionately involved with bhangra for 15 years—continues, "The [South] Asian market has been a really important part of urban music for a long time. This dialogue has always been there, and that community has always accounted for a huge amount of that particular music's sales. But I think that's really being noticed now and acted upon."

"Records like Missy Elliott's 'Get U R Freak On' and Truth Hurts' 'Addictive' by producers like Timbaland and DJ Quik are great, and have been really important. The way hip-hop, r&b and dancehall have all been using Indian rhythms, voices and instruments has definitely helped make people pay attention to this music. But the difference between what we're doing—playing bhangra and hip-hop together and using the best of both in our music—is that when we make and produce records, we're actually going out to Indian villages and working with artists in a very hands-on way. We love hip-hop and always have, but a lot of the sounds you're hearing within it are just taken from sample CDs, and you're never going to get the same feeling from a CD as you can from actually being there."

Doubters should check tracks like the Desi Mix of Satwinder Bitty's "Hai Hai," Tigerstyle's "Mele Dhol de Vich" or anything from RDB's latest album. If American urban music's Indian summer was a flirtation with South Asian sounds, then Panjabi Hit Squad and RDB are the real thing, involved in an ardent, all-consuming love affair. But contemporary pop's usage of sampled sub-continental motifs may have helped clear a path for desi music to enter the mainstream on its own terms. Notes Mark: "I'm a real bhangra enthusiast, and when we're working in the studio, I often find myself saying, 'Come on, let's make this one as raw as we can, more authentic...'"

Similarly, although RDB's sound maintains a uniquely eclectic character, *Unstoppable* does show signs of a more purist approach. As Kuly says: "The album still has all our different influences within it, but everyone's heard a lot of hip-hop with Indian sounds now. This time we thought it was the right time to take the music a little further back to its roots. Yeah, I think we made a pretty conscious decision to keep it desi for this one."

For more on the South Asian music scene, check out www.realbhangra.co.uk and www.panjabihitsquad.com.

Tune into Panjabi Hit Squad on www.bbc.co.uk/1xtra.



“IT WAS CRAZY, LITERALLY THE SOUND OF PATRIOTISM OUT OF CONTROL.”

CIVIL WAR HEROES

PROVING THEY AREN'T JUST RIGID CUT 'N' SAMPLE FETISHISTS, BAY AREA DUO MATMOS CHANGES DIRECTIONS AGAIN ON A NEW ALBUM, AS THEY CONTINUE TO DEMOLISH THE BOUNDARIES OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC.

WORDS PAUL SULLIVAN
IMAGES CHRISTOPHER WOODCOCK

Martin Schmidt and Andrew “Drew” Daniel’s last LP, *A Chance To Cut Is A Chance To Cure*, famously combined samples of plastic surgery and liposuction treatments, scattered yet lucid sounds fished from bizarre sources, and some well-crafted electronic textures. Along with their increasingly intimate involvement with Icelandic pop queen Björk (they co-produced several tracks on her *Vespertine* album, got the warm-up slot for her 2001 tour and finally became part of her live set up in 2003), the album helped shift them into the bright glare of the mainstream spotlight. But anyone who expected a poppier fourth LP obviously doesn’t know Matmos. Though shot through with live instrumentation and definitely less conceptual than its predecessor, *The Civil War* (Matador) is still an artistically brave and highly exploratory outing—who else would dare to balance medieval fantasy with both contemporary political statement and a *musique concrete* approach to building tracks?

XLR8R: *How did your collaborations with Björk begin?*
Drew Daniel: It all started when she came to see us at the Knitting Factory. We were performing stuff from *A Chance To Cut...*, so she got to see us playing the rat cage, and enjoyed the *musique concrete* idea of seeing the object that creates the sound. She liked the idea that electronic music could be alive if you allow it to be. After we remixed [her tune] “Alarm Call” in 1997, we started hanging out socially, and the relationship has built from there.

XLR8R: *You’re part of her live band now. What common ground have you discovered?*
Martin Schmidt: Well, she is very forgiving of error. We were afraid of being in the band initially, as we didn’t want to ruin the music. But when my computer crashed in front of 36,000 people at Coachella, she found it hilarious. She definitely has balls, and she is very loyal to the people she collaborates with, which is rare. In that sense we have a lot in common. None of us like to reproduce songs accurately either. We all have to have a reliable core, but also room for freedom.

XLR8R: *The last record seemed tightly conceptual, but the new one seems thematically incoherent. Why is this?*
DD: The new album is a reaction to the last one. It’s a pendulum swing away from



“WE’RE PRO-CLUTTER AND ANTI-MINIMALISM.”

our normal working methodology, and was made in a more organic, intuitive manner without any predetermined concept. In a sense we’re stepping into the dark, because we decided to largely avoid our concept-driven practices. There is one song on the new record that’s made out of a single object (a piece made out of the heavily amplified sounds of a rabbit’s pelt being stroked and flapped and touched) but generally we avoided our usual strategy of conceptual restriction. Our second album, *Quasi Objects*, was made using a “one object per song” rule, in the spirit of Matthew Herbert’s Wishmountain tracks or Pierre Henry’s *Variations For A Door And A Sigh*. So, the new album really is a different approach for us.

XLR8R: What does The Civil War sound like exactly?

MS: My favorite description of the new album is that it’s like one of those Russian dolls where you lift one up and there’s a smaller one sitting underneath. I’ve always liked the way that music can be anachronistic and untimely in that way. When you listen to Pentangle and Fairport Convention you get the 1968 version of 1582. When you hear My Bloody Valentine or The Jesus and Mary Chain you get the 1994 version of 1968. When you listen to Erase Errata or Adult. you get the 2003 version of 1981, and so on. So I guess this record is the 2003 version of the 1994 version of the 1968 version of the 1860 version of the 1660 version of the 1490s. It goes right back to the Renaissance era, which is why there are so many medieval instruments. We bought instruments such as the hurdy-gurdy, the Psalter, the Autoharp, fairy bells, etc. from a Sotheby’s auction, as well as using piano, tuba, bassoon, violin, pedal and electric guitars.

XLR8R: So you’ve forfeited your roles as technology fetishists to embrace live musicianship?

MS: Well, we don’t relate to being musicians at all. Even though there are real instruments here, we don’t want to get blown away by them. We still treat them as objects.

DD: Technology is still at the core of how the songs are made. The ingredients are “real instruments,” but everything is still mediated, manipulated, spliced and snipped. Neither of us are properly trained—Martin had a few piano lessons as a child, but we’re really self-taught. We can’t *play* in any proper sense. That said, we did talk some friends who are professionally trained into helping us out. [Drummer] Steve Goodfriend and [multi-instrumentalist] Mark Lightcap [who played electric and acoustic guitars, tuba, peck horn, trumpet, banjo] both studied composition at Cal Arts, and Blevin Blectum [who played violin] studied com-

position at the Oberlin Conservatory and later at Mills. So there are some actually talented people along for the ride on this record. There’s quite a large cast of gullible friends who came over and played for us, from Martin’s drinking buddy Ned, who happened to play the bassoon, to David Grubbs, a pal from [my hometown] Louisville, KY who plays piano rather well. He contributed a nice little vamp on the tune of “Shortnin’ Bread” to one of the songs. [Another Louisvillian], our friend Keenan Lawler, actually went into a large sewer pipe in Kentucky and tuned his steel guitar to the resonant frequency of the sewer pipe and recorded some great improv guitar noise for us underground.

XLR8R: What’s the version of John Phillip Sousa’s “The Stars and Stripes Forever” all about?

DD: It comes out of an experience we had this summer on the Fourth of July. We were in Hoover, Alabama, on our way back from visiting my grandmother in Montgomery—I went to record her telling family stories. We noticed in the newspaper that a piano store was trying to break the *Guinness Book of World Records* record for the largest number of grand pianos playing simultaneously. They had 121 grand pianos all playing “The Star Spangled Banner,” “I’m A Yankee Doodle Dandy” and other patriotic songs. The experience of hearing J. P. Sousa’s “The Stars and Stripes Forever” played all around us by people of many different ages and skill levels, all starting off together and more or less sliding out of time with each other, was just fabulous. It sounded like Charles Ives or something. It was crazy, literally the sound of patriotism out of control—sadly all too apt given the current political situation. Thinking about the difference between the score on the page and the weird sea of information around us, it was like some kind of weird model for how democracy works: a beautiful idea that gets increasingly distorted and compromised over time. We’ve always loved Sousa; his compositions are pretty much bulletproof and can stand up to whatever you throw at them. It was a lot of fun to do that cover.

XLR8R: So you’ve created an inclusive and cluttered album, then?

MS: Yes. I guess you could ask, is it medieval music? Is it historical fantasy? An American record about the surrounding patriot moment out of control and marches? But then what about all these tranquil bits? We’ve been inclusive and cluttered, and hopefully that’s more in line with people’s experiences. And if anything, we’re united by the common enemy that is the modernist white-cube model of contemporary electronica—we’re pro-clutter and anti-minimalism.®

The Civil War is out now on Matador Records: www.matadorrecords.com. For more on Matmos check their home site: www.brainwashed.com/matmos

KINKY ATLAS

“[KINKY’S] MUSIC MAKES FOR A STUNNING LIVE SHOW AND A SIMULTANEOUSLY CEREBRAL AND VISCERAL ALBUM.”
— NEW YORK TIMES

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LOOSE LIPS

THEIR GRITTY, PUNK-FUNK HOUSE MUSIC HAS LAUNCHED THE ODDLY NAMED TRIO CHICKEN LIPS INTO THE UNDERGROUND'S SPOTLIGHT. BUT IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME THEY'VE BEEN THERE.

**WORDS JAMES FRIEDMAN
IMAGES ALI KEPENEK**

"It was the classic overnight success story, really," explains Andy Meecham from his home in Stafford, a small town in England's Midlands. He's reminiscing about the heady days of acid house and rave when he and musical partner Dean Meredith—working as Bizarre Inc—had a string of crossover dance hits that landed on Britain's pop music charts. "Bizarre Inc started off with 'Playing With Knives,' which was a proper underground thing. It got to number 41, I think. But things kept getting bigger, and next thing I knew 'I'm Gonna Get You' got to number three. We signed to a bigger label and that's when everything went pear-shaped."

Meecham and Meredith became celebrities with dizzying speed, and they found themselves totally unequipped to deal with the pressures put on them by the staff at Warner Brothers, their new label. As Meecham tells it, "They wanted an album of dance pop just like 'I'm Gonna Get You,' but we recorded a jazz-funk record. They were well pissed at us and never released it." Growing almost wistful, he manages to find some humor in a bad situation. "I guess we can put it out ourselves when the master rights revert back to us in 2010."

Luckily, Meecham and Meredith have plenty to keep them busy in the meantime. In addition to a dizzying number of solo projects—like Meecham's Sir Drew and Emperor Machine aliases and Meredith's Psychodelia Smith project—the two mates maintain a baffling release schedule as both Chicken Lips and Big 200. Born out of frustration with the "corporate machine," their myriad musical enterprises pay the bills on indie label budgets. As Meecham sees it, "When you don't have a major backing your work, you tend to do more work to sustain everything."

Although such varied work represents a means to an end, the financial explanation is only part of the story. Music fiends since their youths—which were spent toying with synthesizers and collecting electro, funk and disco records—Meecham and Meredith seem to be consumed by a persistent vision of the dancefloor as a place where boundaries fall away and nothing is off limits.

While Big 200's *Your Personal Filth* showed an obvious affinity for No Wave and DFA-style disco-punk, the Emperor Machine is pure machine music inspired by "'70s sci-fi themes and early electronic music," and Sir Drew draws from more main floor-friendly sources like Parliament Funkadelic. Chicken Lips manages to amalgamate all these disparate directions into something ineffable.

Shifting from Idjut Boys-style dub house to deep, Metro Area-esque disco boogie to stripped-down minimal acid grooves, their songs strike a bizarre balance between the familiarity of the classics and the shock of the new. Organic live drum & bass sounds are swaddled in echoing atmospherics and subtly twist-

ed synth melodies. Listening to a few Chicken Lips productions side by side is like hearing the best house-party DJ you've never seen before at a club too cool for reality.

It's no wonder, then, that Meecham and Meredith find little time for all of their commitments. In addition to their breakneck remix schedule (which includes recently released tracks for Playgroup, Sono, and Chicks On Speed), they've managed to assemble two mind-bogglingly good mix-CDs: NRK's *Body Music* and what may be the most inspired installment in !K7's venerated *DJ-Kicks* series. Then there's Meecham's first single as Emperor Machine, a forthcoming remix for KIM on Tigersushi, and plans for both Emperor Machine and Chicken Lips full-lengths. Add a heavy load of international DJ gigs to the mix, and their schedules become completely impossible.

Enter Steve "Fella" Kotey, a veteran London house head who recently joined forces with the Lips. Having worked fruitfully since their days as classmates, Meecham and Meredith seem glad to have a likeminded DJ in the mix, especially since Meecham has been forced to take a break from DJing thanks to a painful case of tinnitus. Not only can Kotey pick up the slack on the DJ front, he's begun collaborating on new Chicken Lips material for their third artist album, due out next spring. On very much the same creative wavelength, Kotey has fit right in, "mainly because he's into what we're into," explains Meecham. "He's the perfect candidate, really."

As a whole, the Lips discography belies the notion that the current obsession with dance music's formative years is retrogressive. Alongside folks like Trevor Jackson, Tigersushi, and Black Strobe's Ivan Smagghe, Chicken Lips are at the forefront of a new sound that draws from disco, dub, punk, new wave, electro, acid, hip-hop and techno, with little regard for what the dance music press thinks or what the punters at your local mega-club say. It's as if rave never grew past the early days of outlaw warehouse parties, and music—regardless of genre or style—had remained the substance upon which the scene was built.

Unlike many of their peers, Chicken Lips have not remained in the relative obscurity of the European style press, but stood in the spotlight alongside some of dance music's biggest players. In addition to hard-to-find remixes of relative unknowns like Zurich's Headman, the Lips have brought their unique flavor to remixes for Underworld, FC Kahuna and San Francisco legend DJ Garth. They're taking an underground phenomenon far beyond its humble beginnings. But then again, that's how it's always been for these guys. Bizarre, isn't it?®

Chicken Lips DJ Kicks is out now on !K7 Records. www.k7.com



Chicken Lips (from left): Steve "Fella" Kotey, Dean Meredith, Andy Meecham

THE BEST OF 2003



Hashim Binnoucha

Best Music Trend: Disco Punk
Cause it can be raw, live and well-produced all at the same time. At least if the DFA touches it. *Abe Burmeister, Abstract Dynamics*

The integration of punk and dance music as exemplified by !!!. These guys have got it right. They sound really fresh and unaffected, and they've managed to churn out nine-minute songs without a single second of filler. *Kevin Grady, GUM Magazine*



T.Raumschmiere

Best Album to Get Busy To: T. Raumschmiere *Radio Blackout* (Mute)

Perfect for the "post-argument, still a bit angry, forget making love—let's fuck!"-type of nookie. *Peter Nicholson, freelance journalist*

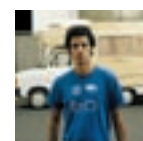
ARTISTS AND EXPERTS RANT AND RAVE ABOUT THIS YEAR'S MUSIC AND CULTURE CROP

Save the confetti and noise-makers, 2003 is ending with a thud, not a bang. There's good and bad in every year, but these past twelve months will be remembered mostly for their debilitating inertia. Stagnation, rehashes, nostalgia, frustration and dysfunction are the rather dire set of characteristics that describe the music and culture that cropped up this year. You have to admit, not much changed in '03; this year was like 2002 Part Two: The Dumber Version. Most of the styles, sounds, trends and even technological breakthroughs had their origins last year, and that even applies to us.

Like last year's inaugural Best Of poll (*XLR8R* #64), we've again opted to query a remarkable and opinionated group of freelance writers, producers, public relations people, label owners and generally music-savvy folks to tell us what ruled and what blew in the O-Trey. Once more the respondents came through with spot-on analyses of the cultural landscape and even some hints about what lies ahead for next year. Whether it's Dizzee or DFA, iPods or *The Office*, these citizens knew what was up, down and downsized.

So, as we all collectively recover from the hangover of war in Iraq and a shitty world economy, here's some bright spots that got us from January to December. I'll crack the Cristal for ya—oh wait, champagne is, like, so '02. Make that a Guinness instead. *Tomas Palermo*

BEST ARTIST



Four Tet
Kieran Hebden deserves every ounce of publicity he receives. He's a forward-thinking artist in the truest sense of the term. *Jeanne Klafin, Mute Records*

Jesper Dahlback It's been a good year so far with his DK8 project, that DJ Lenk 12", tons of remixes and the latest Sunday Brunch single on Svek that continues to blow my mind. *Aaron Michelson, Ubiquity Records*



DJ Spinna I know of no [other producer] who cross-pollinates so many genres so successfully. Deep, soulful NY garage, West London broken beat, live jazz, neo-soul and hip-hop all nestle comfortably in Spinna's mature musical template. *Michael Adasko, Studio Distribution*

Felix the Housecat For keeping it real, staying in the business forever, doing the coolest commercial around, working with P Diddy, staying humble and giving electronic music a black household image. *King Britt, producer, FiveSixMedia*



The Mars Volta [These guys] took off [from] their old band right as they were about to explode, and switched shit up. They also took taboo music ideas—guitar solos, soaring vocals and general prog rock excess—and made it good again. *Nobody, producer, Ubiquity Recordings*

Monolake Robert Henke is the only artist out there who, with every release, pushes his sound further along the abstract line running between dub, techno and dark ambience without losing anyone in his audience. *Heath K. Hignight, freelance journalist*



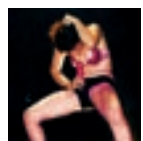
The Roots Hands down the most talented musicians in music. The only relevant black "band" in America and the only thing people will be proud to reference in the future when we look back at current hip-hop in 20 years. *Tayyib, music promotions, BBE Records*



Prefuse 73 This guy is obviously from another planet. He makes most other people in the music biz sound like The Wiggles. Truly sick. *Kevin Grady, GUM Magazine*

The Bug The musical cure to anyone sick of hearing a downloaded ragga acapella over a cut-up Amen break. *Kid606, Tigerbeat6*

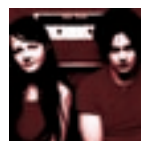
WORST ARTIST



Peaches Tired, unsexy and all-round lame. Merrill Nisker's debut album, *The Teaches Of Peaches*, may have been a caustic blast of do-it-yourself filth, but three years later the shtick has worn extremely thin. *Dave Stelfox, freelance journalist*

Any group with "the" in front or any three word-named band
The Stills, The Strokes, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Hot Hot Heat, !!!, If I want to listen to the Rolling Stones, I'll listen to them. *Christopher Lehault, creative director, Spiewak*

The Rapture Remember when they weren't kicking the disco shit? I do. [Their music is] more regurgitation than reinvention. *Jeanne Klafin, Mute Records*



The White Stripes Do they deserve all of the attention and over-the-top critical applause that they constantly receive? Am I the only one in the world who doesn't get it? *Kevin Grady, GUM Magazine*

Northern State Taking into account sheer lack of talent coupled with their massive over-hype, Northern State and the entire Murder Inc. roster come out as the winners. Never have so few given so much total shit to so many. *DJ Enki, Future Primitive Sound*

N.E.R.D. [This group is] one part The Monkees, two parts teen band, three parts motherfuckers who must be in a secret LA cult that ensures you success through kickbacks. *Tayyib, music promotions, BBE Records*

BEST ALBUM



Dizzee *Rascal Boy In Da Corner* (XL)
By turns thugged-out and touching, abrasive and fragile, heartbreaking and humorous, this is the most exciting album to come out of merry ol' England for many a long year. *Dave Stelfox, freelance journalist*

[There's] only one sample on his whole album! [Dizzee makes] completely fresh, no-bullshit tunes that make you forget The Streets exists—or at least make you realize that you really don't have anything in common with a whiny British twat who's got [a few] good hooks and way too big of an advertising campaign. *Kid606, Tigerbeat6*

Prefuse 73 *One World Extinguisher* (Warp) Amazing production—this guy has filled all the gaps between electronics and hip-hop. *Jonah Sharp, Reflective Records*



Broadcast *Ha Ha Sound* (Warp) Perfectly replicates the '60s analogue sound while [also] sounding futuristic, forward-thinking and fucked-up. All the right things together: distortion, bubbles, great songs, fat drums and Trish. *Nobody, producer, Ubiquity Recordings*

Watchers *To The Rooftops* (Gern Blandsten) Probably the most slept-on album of the year; a white funk juggernaut at once complex and immediate, plus their kinetic live shows make !!! look like a bunch of shoegazers. *Lawrence Lui, Astralwerks Records*

Outkast *Speakerboxxx/The Love Below* (La Face) It's P-funk on one side, Prince on the other—2003 ice-cold pimping in a Dirty South manner all the fuck over the place. *Abe Burmeister, Abstract Dynamics*

It's the only double album in recent memory that actually works. I pop in the Andre side and sing my little ass off to it. Then, right before everyone in the office thinks I've gone a little soft, I pop in the Big Boi side and I'm gangsta all over again. It's a vicious cycle. *Nima Nabavi, owner, DigitalGravel.com*



TV On The Radio *Young Liars* (Touch & Go) In a scene where every band seems to be self-consciously looking over their shoulders at the past, these guys nonchalantly defy categories with their slightly spooky crooner electro-rock-meets-what-ever. Their acappella Pixies cover is an other-worldly delight. *Lawrence Lui, Astralwerks Records*

Monsta Island *Czars Escape From Monsta Island* (Metal Face/Rhymesayers) Ferocious rhymes and unstoppable beats from the sickest crew in hip-hop. Also peep their Monster Mix series, and watch out for new solo LPs from Jet Jaguar, Rodan and Megalon. M.I.C. are the future. *Brolin Winning, 442 Records, Elemental magazine*

WORST ALBUM



The Rapture *Echoes* (DFA) "House of Jealous Lovers" is truly great. But is [The Rapture's album] worth the hype? Is it call-your-friends-in-the-middle-of-the-night-'cause-this-is-the-best-fucking-thing-you've-heard-in-years great? And will future generations marvel at its fabulousness? No, no and no. *Kevin Grady, GUM Magazine*

Radiohead *Hail to the Thief* (Capitol)
What a shame that these guys took the musical frequency and sound of their last two records and just played it incessantly throughout this whole record. I love this band's past output, but excuse me—where are the songs on this one? *Adam Kurzawa, Giant Step NYC*

Radiohead made an album that was wholly un compelling, but I don't know if that quantifies them as worst. It's really passé to join the R-head backlash at this point in the game, so may I suggest instead that Jay-Z's half-verse on Beyonce's "Crazy In Love" made me want to filet myself with a dull pumpkin-carving knife. For that reason, I totally understood when he announced his retirement, because his shit is getting opaque and gimpy and nothing rhymes with chinchilla. *Jessica Hopper, Hopper PR*

The Neptunes *Clones* (Arista) Complete garbage. Viacom Video spins don't work on my ears. *Tayyib, Music Promotions, BBE Records*



Liz Phair *Liz Phair* (Capitol) There were albums that were much worse, no doubt, but this one hurt the most because it reduced the once-great Liz Phair to a really bad, overproduced Liz Phair imitation. Like Com Sense, I used to love her. Now I just wistfully recall her. *DJ Enki, Future Primitive Sound*

Every singer-songwriter album that major labels put out this year
These soulless wimps took Neil Young's template and ruined it with their whining about being lost and confused. Listen to Nick Drake and then really think about how sad you are, and then listen to Iron and Wine and Devendra Banhart to learn how to do it right. There's even a horribly bastardized version of Sabbath's "Paranoid" from this past year given the full limp-dick treatment. Let's hope this whole genre is gone and vanished by 2004. *Nobody, producer, Ubiquity Recordings*

BEST ALBUM TO GET BUSY TO



Mr. Dibbs *The 30" Letter* (Rhymesayers Entertainment) If you and your partner in crime can out-moan the raunchy "Porntablist," then you're up to some weird, wild stuff. *DJ Enki, Future Primitive Sound*

Disco *D A Night At The Booty Bar* (Tommy Boy) Fuck all that smooth shit—it's time to get down on the flo'. *Alex Moulton, Expansion Team*



Clientele *The Violet Hour* (Merge) I don't think this record goes beyond 70 BPM, his vocals don't go far beyond a whisper, and his guitar is as jangly as The Byrds but as spacious as Sigur Rós. It's the perfect sound environment to be in the buff to. *Nobody, producer, Ubiquity Recordings*

!!! *Me and Giuliani Down by the School Yard* (Touch and Go) This CD dares you to sit still. *Kevin Grady, GUM Magazine*



Kaito *Special Love* (Kompakt) Soupy ambient version of a luscious Kompakt [label] thumper that's remarkably romantic—and requires absolutely no lubrication (alcoholic or otherwise). *Heath K. Hignight, freelance journalist*

Yeah Yeah Yeahs *Fever To Tell* (Interscope) Two words: Karen O. *James Friedman, Output Records US, freelance journalist*

BEST MUSIC LABEL



Quannum Projects It isn't the most prolific label out there, but it does stand for quality, and that's much more important than constantly having new shit clogging up store shelves. The records QP put out this year were all solid, if not fantastic. *DJ Enki, Future Primitive Sound*

Day By Day In just a few short years, Day By Day has quickly become one of hip-hop's most consistently dope labels. With GM Grimm and D.J. Fisher at the helm, they've released over a dozen excellent albums, including Count Bass D's *Dwight Spitz*, Grimm's *Downfall of Iblis: A Ghetto Opera*, Lightheaded's *Pure Thoughts*, and Prophetix's *High Risk*. Recognize. *Brolin Winning, 442 Records, Elemental Magazine*

Raw Fusion Mad Mats with his finger on the pulse of Scandinavia! *Nik Weston, Mukatsuku PR*



Warp Records Their releases have been scrupulously consistent, challenging, different, genreless—do I need to go on? Wasn't a fan of Anti-Pop, but that Beans record was A+, the new Prefuse 73 album = the hotness, and the singles, oh the singles. Luke Vibert for starters. Do I love acid? Yes, ma'am, if Luke's the one dropping it. *Adam Kurzawa, Giant Step NYC*



Madlib

Best Artist: Madlib
Hands down best artist this year, although the team of J. Rawls and Fat Jon is a close second. It all comes down to quality, and with Madlib's *Shades of Blue* Blue Note re-work album, production credits on Dudley Perkins's debut LP, and stellar work on the Jaylib record, he's just made my year. Normally, quantity doesn't come into the equation, but the fact that Madlib can make this many dope productions in the span of a year boggles the mind. *Adam Kurzawa, Giant Step NYC*

Jaylib, Madvillain, Dudley Perkins, Yesterdays New Quintet, Beat Conductor, Quasimodo. I thought only electronic artists were allowed to have so many aliases and collaborations. I was wrong, and Otis Jackson was the force behind some of the most positive revolutions (RPMs and otherwise) in 2003. *Daedelus, producer, Mushi/Plug Research*



Fawn Gehweiler

FAWN GEHWELER'S TOP 10 CANDIES AND SWEETS THAT RULED THE WORLD IN 2003

- Brighton rock candy from the little shops on the Palace Pier, Brighton, UK.
- Giant sugar-coated homemade marshmallows from the Sugarplum Bakery, LA.
- Five-pound bags of homemade salt water taffy from Fisherman's Wharf, SF.
- The Fantasia cone at Disneyland versus the Ginger Rosewater cone at Mashti Malone's, LA.
- Pastel cupcakes with sprinkles from the Magnolia Bakery, NY.
- Black licorice dolly mix.
- Oversized swirly lollipops.
- Baby-blue cotton candy.
- Classic Brach's Pick-A-Mix, root beer barrels, nougats and neopolitans.
- Fresh malasadas from Tex's Drive-In, HI.

THE BEST OF 2003



CHRISTOPHER WOODROCK
JON SANTOS/COMMONSPACE DESIGN
NOSE HAIR BEST OF 2003

1. **Album:** Gold Chains *Young Miss America* (PIAS)
2. **Music Label:** DFA or Tigerbeat6 (completely torn)
3. **Live Event:** Trevor Jackson at Passerby
4. **Music Trend:** Acid house
5. **Electronic Gadget I Can't Live Without:** nose hair trimmer
6. **Graphic Designer:** Hunter Gatherer
7. **Clothing Line:** Opening Ceremony
8. **Media Item:** Lightning Bolt *The Power of Salad* DVD (MVD)
9. **Video Game:** Pong
10. **Alcoholic Beverage:** Fucking Red Stripe, dawg!



ERASE ERRATA
Best Artist: Erase Errata They are working entirely outside of the context. Akin to the barrier that early Sonic Youth broke, EE just made a new language of hummingbird hands while disregarding 100 years of blues-based/macho-rock detritus—and it's not primalism, it's not [a] rebellion against [anything]. It's just [music] loaded with its own life cycles and operating [in an] orbit [on] an unseen, unknown axis. *Jessica Hopper, Hopper PR*

Kompakt Great to see the continued evolution of one of Germany's most respected imprints. Mixing Cologne's signature glam-rock "schaffel" with bubbling dubby techno, gorgeous ambient soundscapes and a special kind of populist panache, Michael Mayer and friends deserve every last bit of their ongoing success. *Dave Stelfox, freelance journalist*

OSR **Offshore Recordings** Clever's self-proclaimed fringe drum & bass label has been steadily gathering momentum in the Rotten Apple since 2001. With only five releases under its belt, Offshore has already stacked an impressive roster, including ASC, Deep Blue, Seba, Pieter K, Alpha Omega, Paradox, Justice and Sileni. *DJ M, Faultline Productions*

Wobblyhead A new hope for American electronic labels, Wobblyhead launched no less than three artist albums (Floridan, Am-boy, and Signaldrift) that ran way outside the established norms for American electronic music while retaining an hint of edgy pop-ism. *Heath K. Hignight, freelance journalist*

SPECTRA **Spectral** For the logo and record sleeves alone. The music is awesome as well. *King Britt, producer, FiveSixMedia*

Bpitch Control Just for taking as many risks as they have and still coming out strong with a stellar lineup of talent. *Alex Moulton, Expansion Team*

Domino Because their releases are varied yet consistent. They take me back to the days when I would shop by label and just trust their taste. *Ken Miller, Tokion Magazine*

BEST LIVE EVENT/FESTIVAL

Q. And Not U at the Knitting Factory and North Six Don't miss this band live if you know what's good for you. This trio kicks out more jams than At The Drive-In doing their best MC5 imitation after reading Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* with a 40-minute set limit to change the world of rock forever or never play a show again. *Adam Kurzawa, Giant Step NYC*

Rocky Dawuni's Independence Splash, March 6 in Accra, Ghana The festival features the most cutting-edge music in West Africa—from hip-life (hip-hop and hi-life mixed) to traditional Ghanaian rhythms to reggae. Each year has brought out over 30,000 people to celebrate the independence of Africa. *Cary Sullivan, Temple Bar*

Derrick May at De La Guarda, New York Holy muthaf%&#ing shit. Like some sort of crazy jungle rave, with Derrick May throwing down the most debauched, dirty tribal beats as people were taking off their clothes, making out, dirty and soaking wet. When I die, I hope this is where I end up. *Maya Duani, System Recordings*

Mutek 2003, Montreal The most refreshing and innovative event I've been to in a long, long time. I actually attended the panels! *Jeanne Klafin, Mute Records*

NYC blackout *Kate Sennert, Tokion magazine*

BEST CLUB OR VENUE

Martinez Gallery, Greenpoint, Brooklyn Martinez Gallery reminds us that it is possible in NYC to side step the law, run a successful club, have it unpretentiously integrate art, and have a good vibe. *Michael Adasko, Studio Distribution*

Centro-Fly, New York Still a good price, small venue, great sound, and killer acts. Too much house, though—but hey, this is NYC. *Christopher Lehault, creative director, Spiewak*

Fabric, London Dark and dirty—both the space and the beats. Kaos Fridays are killer. *Maya Duani, System Recordings*

Empty Bottle, Chicago Big enough to get larger bands in still, but small enough to feel like a bar where you can meet friends and the booze is cheap. *Kathryn Frazier, owner, Biz 3 Publicity*

Plastic People, London The best soundsystem in the city, superb bookings policy and a homey intimate vibe make this little venue a true jewel in the UK capital's crown. *Dave Stelfox, freelance journalist*

APT, New York It has the best music policy of any venue in the US, period. If only they had a full-on dancefloor. *James Friedman, Output Records US, freelance journalist*

Stubb's BBQ, Austin, TX There's nothing quite like the smell of charred cattle and pig flesh wafting over you during a Polyphonic Spree concert. *Heath K. Hignight, freelance journalist*

Bimbo's 365 Club, San Francisco Although the name conjures up images of nipple tassels and metal poles, the venue is a stunning example of a classic concert hall. They host the likes of Prefuse 73, Goldfrapp and Spiritualized, and Bimbo's plush interior and tolerable Long Island Iced Teas make it the perfect place to see a show. *Jessica Miller, photographer*

Texas Ballroom, Chicago Eleven kids live in this space on Chicago's South Side, throwing shows, dance parties and fundraisers in 4800 sq foot ballroom. The only way to get down from the DJ booth is on a slide or down a rope. They also have a giant swing hanging from the ceiling. It's like a McDonald's playland. *Jessica Hopper, Hopper PR*

Deep, Los Angeles Real music, real people and Marques Wyatt. *King Britt, producer, FiveSixMedia*

BEST MUSIC TREND

The return of sample-based production in mainstream hip-hop As dope as the Neptunes and Timbaland are, it's refreshing to hear old soul loops coming back hard. Jay-Z beatmakers Kanye West and Just Blaze filled *The Blueprint* with vintage jams, and the result was Jay's best record since his debut. Soul Supreme and 9th Wonder are taking early-'90s-style sampling to new heights, and NYC producers like Ayatollah and Alchemist are holding it down as well. If things continue this way, Casio-jocking dudes like Swizz Beatz will soon be out of a job. *Brolin Winning, 442 Records, Elemental Magazine*

Protest music People actually making songs that speak up and help to make the word spread. *Kathryn Frazier, owner, Biz 3 Publicity*

Dancehall and bhangra hitting the mainstream *Anna Chapman, freelance journalist*

The return of soul to hip-hop in the form of sampling We've been suffering through too many shitty glitch-hop/craptacular minimalist Neptunes knock-offs for too long. That stuff is so incredibly boring. *DJ Enki, Future Primitive Sound*

Glitch/IDM These styles gave the nerdy kids a say in what goes down in music. Groups like Twine, Kid606 (pictured), Travel Geeks and Matmos made change [in music]. *King Britt, producer, FiveSixMedia*

Getting away from glitch Thanks, I can finally dislodge the meat thermometers thrust into my ears in a fit of sheer laptop madness and enjoy the music again. *Heath K. Hignight, freelance journalist*

Open-mindedness At the record store I work at, it isn't uncommon to sell a Madlib record and a Beat Happening record to the same kid. *Nobody, producer, Ubiquity Recordings*

WORST MUSIC TREND

Stagnancy Hil It's the music-buying public! We've got loads of disposable income, but there's nothing interesting to buy! We bought those CDs with the bonus videos and live tracks, but they ended up crashing our computers! Give us a call when something original pops up, okay? In the meantime, we'll be at Virgin returning our electroclash compilations for store credit. *Carleton Curtis, freelance journalist*

Commercial hip-hop Commercial hip-hop is becoming the "hair metal" of this generation. Kids will not admit that they bought records by any of these "artists" in 10 years; they'll laugh at them on VH-1's *Where Are They Now?* *Adam Kurzawa, Giant Step NYC*

Mash-up artists and the accompanying hype A DJ doing a mash-up or three as part of his or her live set is one thing. Nobody cares about your new R. Kelly-versus-Taco abomination. Either learn how to mix for real or fuck off. *DJ Enki, Future Primitive Sound*

"Return to the Golden Age" of hip-hop De La and Tribe didn't have anyone to emulate, so they tried out *fresh* shit. If we want to bring it back to the "golden age," shouldn't we do some *fresh* shit, instead of trying to make *The Low End Theory* over and over again? *Nobody, producer, Ubiquity Recordings*

Dance punk as exemplified by The Rapture and Radio 4 Both artists are good, but sounding exactly like The Cure/Gang of Four/PIL/The Clash does not a musical revolution make. Plus their cover designs are really, really bad, which I hope isn't the start of yet another trend. *Kevin Grady, GUM Magazine*

Anything that sounds like Johnny Gill's solo records *Jessica Hopper, Hopper PR*

Motherfuckers sounding like Rod Stewart and shit Extra bullet-holes if they look like him too. *Abe Burmeister, Abstract Dynamics*

Glitchy sounds with no musical purpose whatsoever, other than to show off the processing prowess of one's G4 Glitch is becoming the sonic caricature of the decade, like the '70s "handclap" or that '80s Phil Collins-y reverberated snare. *Tara Rodgers, musician, Pinknoises.com*



Dirty South It took black people years to get to a place of respect in the United States mainstream vision. Then songs that have horrible English, country-grammar and Chicken George stereotypes just trash all we've worked for. Right there! *King Britt, producer, FiveSixMedia*

Disposable house music If Reason/Fruity Loops, etc. does to dance music what the ease of Photoshop did to graphic design, then it's going to be even harder in 2004 to dig for good tunes in the music shops. *Aaron Michelson, Ubiquity Records*

BEST MUSIC HARDWARE

Stanton Final Scratch Revolutionizing the entire concept of DJing. No wonder hotness like Josh Wink, Bad Boy Bill and Richie Hawtin are rocking it. *Maya Duani, System Recordings*

The Pioneer CDJ-1000 It's changed the rules of the game. You can test new tracks on unaware audiences to gauge the damage a dubplate can do to the dancefloor; you can create your own scratch records and make previously unheard-of sounds to scratch and sample in the lab. *David Monterroso, marketing slave, Spiewak*

Korg MS50 synth An analog beast from the '70s that delivers the goods. *Jonah Sharp, Reflective Records*

BEST MUSIC SOFTWARE

Propellerheads' Reason sound library If you don't mind bouncing down audio and re-sampling a few times, Reason's sound library has provided the best variety of high-quality samples in recent history. The addition of 600MBs of orchestral samples with version 2.0 makes this an essential purchase. *David Monterroso, marketing slave, Spiewak*

Native Instruments Kontakt I'm just learning, but for sound design, it's the ultimate. *King Britt, producer, FiveSixMedia*

Ableton Live It's still the only reliable laptop performance application. Live 3 will take it a stage further. *Jonah Sharp, Reflective Records*

ELECTRONIC GADGET I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

iPod Yep, I said it. I know that everyone's got one, but to be able to walk around with over 5,000 songs at my disposal all day just fills me with glee. Besides, who can stomach radio anymore? *Adam Kurzawa, Giant Step NYC*

Just like any good technology, it's hard to remember the time before its inception. *Jeanne Klafin, Mute Records*

Archos Multimedia Jukebox F**k iPods! My shit is half the cost, has a color screen, and plays both video and photos. Wait till the new one drops with the big screen. *Chris Lehault, creative director, Spiewak*

The Kick George W. Bush Out Of Office Device Sadly, haven't been able to get it to work yet. *Kid606, Tigerbeat6*



ZIM SHELAWAY
Best Album: The Postal Service Give Up (Sub Pop) Never before has electro-rock fusion sounded so human, so humane. Indeed, there's a fine line between a crossover and actually crossing over, and the tenderhearted duo of Jimmy and Ben proved they're part of the exclusive latter. *Carleton Curtis, freelance journalist*



ISAAC BESS/QUANNUM PROJECTS TOP FIVE

1. Eve "Satisfaction" (Interscope) It's real easy to lump all those mainstream hip-hop ladies into one big fake titty, but Eve stands head and shoulders above the rest, and not just because I want to have her babies. She can flow, I dig the low-key production, the fun collabs with other foxy chicks, and that nutty sense of fashion that eschews every Gucci-toting hip-hop cliché. I read in *W Magazine* that Eve drank so much water that she no longer needs to wear make-up, which is totally hot.

2. Cat Power *You Are Free* (Matador) If I could graft anyone's vocal chords onto my own for karaoke purposes, it would be Desmond Dekker's, but Chan from Cat Power runs a very close second.

3. Dizzee Rascal "I Luv You" (XL) It's almost inconceivable that British teens listen to this the same way American kids do Jay-Z, with all those weird noises and lurchy rhythms. But how about his crazy-ass voice and that fucked-up chorus, and that girl sounds real tough. Got tired of it real fast, though. Same with Fanny-pack.

4. The Clash *Westway to the World* (Sony DVD) Once in a while something will reaffirm my love of music so profoundly it almost makes me want to cry. Joe Strummer talking gleefully about WBLS playing "Magnificent Seven" *ad infinitum* in the summer of '81 is pretty much the best thing I've ever seen in my life.

5. Kozyndan These guys still use pens. I could do without the bunnies sometimes, but those panoramic street scenes make me feel like it's five AM in Tokyo all over again.

THE BEST OF 2003



Worst Style Trend: Trucker Hats

Have you seen how stupid you look in those things? I don't care if you're trying to impersonate Pharrell or El-P, you're just exposing yourself to be a hipster jackass. *DJ Enki, Future Primitive Sound*

From London's Shoreditch to Williamsburg, Brooklyn, these things have annoyed the skin off everyone all year. The choice of downsized web designers the world over. *Dave Stelfox, freelance journalist*



MF Doom

Best Artist: MF Doom Few people were as prolific as the Metal Faced one this year, and those who were as prolific were nowhere near as consistent. Doom plays the alias game even better than Kool Keith, and even if you aren't feeling the beats, Doom is that rare lyricist who can make you want to listen anyway, because you just have to know what his next rhyme is gonna be. *DJ Enki, Future Primitive Sound*



Best Label: DFA

This label is still kicking a pretty good batting average, though everyone is waiting patiently, going, "yeah, yeah Juan Maclean, great...," killing time waiting for the LCD full-length to drop, or another *oh-shit-I-could-listen-to-this-100-times-in-a-row* cut of gilded cutz like "House of Jealous Lovers," which—after two years—still kills it on any dance floor. *Jessica Hopper, Hopper PR*

For its multitude of much-needed disco rock hits. Besides, what else would we play at fashion shows and the Tribeca Grand [Hotel]? *Kate Sennert, Tokion*



Walkman That's "Walkman"—not Discman—as in a portable cassette player. I never leave the house without it, and I burn through one every year because I wear the motor out. But I'll be damned if I'm gonna ditch my beloved tapes for some fake-sounding, overpriced, fragile-ass CDs and a battery-devouring Discman that won't even fit in my pocket. *DJ Enki, Future Primitive Sound*

Creative Labs Nomad Jukebox It records 12 hours of CD-quality audio at a time (perfect for DJ nights) and costs like \$200. Hopefully it will be the death of MiniDisc, the jankiest audio format ever. *DJ M, Faultline Productions*



Minidisc player with Sony SRS-T77 portable speakers Great mobile party unit! *Tara Rodgers, musician, Pinknoises.com*

My pacemaker! *Dave Stenton, freelance journalist*

BEST GRAPHIC DESIGNER OR VISUAL ARTIST

Swoon She's a street artist from NYC who does these great paper overlay pieces on graffiti and randomly positioned walls all over the city. The images just jump out at you—she's got a knack for picking brightly colored walls and just making them look alive. You can peep some of her work on the cover of the forthcoming Qatsi album, *We Love The Urge*. *Adam Kurzawa, Giant Step NYC*

Tatiana Arocha/Servicio-Ejecutivo.com Tatiana is one of the few designers out there who is actively supporting the design community while pushing her own work further past everyone else's monotony. *Alex Moulton, Expansion Team*

Banksy Although he loses points for doing the Blur cover...*Dave Stenton, freelance journalist*



ENEONE Out of Philadelphia and probably the dopest of dope in graphic design. *King Britt, producer, FiveSixMedia*

Ryan McGinness 'Cause he actually thinks, a lot. *Abe Burmeister, Abstract Dynamics*

Shynola Their music videos are unbelievable, unique, humorous and visually stimulating. *Anna Chapman, freelance journalist*

Jeff Jank He's almost as prolific with album covers as Madlib is with beats and aliases. *Bryan Whalen, Look Records*

Brent Rollins Often imitated, never duplicated. Just like you know a DJ Premier beat when you hear it, you know a Brent Rollins design when you see it. And like Primo, Rollins always comes correct. *DJ Enki, Future Primitive Sound*

Marcos Chin He did the Lavalife ads that are populating the NYC subways, as well as the artwork for the new Clublife series. He's got a great eye for color and perspective, and catches flirtation on paper better than anyone. *Maya Duani, System Recordings*

Andrew Kuo He spends his own dough making psychedelic show posters for Black Dice just because he's their friend and likes distributing great art. *Ken Miller, Tokion magazine*



Michael Leon (Commonwealth Stacks) *Jamie Strong, Ubiquity Records*

Del Ray Little recognized for their supreme artistic efforts, VJs bring the most relevant visual elements to the best 21st-century environments. Del Ray excels here with his custom software and inspired images. *Jonah Sharp, Reflective Records*

Abigail's Party *Gerald Kelleher, freelance journalist*

Eric Claridge (of Sea & Cake) Such an amazing painter. *Kathryn Frazier, Owner, Biz 3 Publicity*

BEST SHOE

Creative Revolution Really digging their style. *Aaron Michelson, Ubiquity Records*



Perforated white Adidas Forums Because they're not Dunks, they're not limited and they only cost \$70. I put cream laces on them and people thought I had some super-exclusive kicks. *Nima Nabavi, owner, DigitalGravel.com*

Black leather loafers from the Kenneth Cole men's line For the dyke sophisticate. Just wink at those sales ladies in Nordstrom when they look at you weird for shopping in boys' shoes. *Tara Rodgers, musician/Pinknoises.com*



Gravis Circuit Extremely lightweight, durable, everyday kicks in a variety of colorways. *DJ M, Faultline Productions*

Daniel Liebeskind's cowboy boots *Kate Sennert, Tokion magazine*



Clae A nice crossover between casual work shoes and skate comfort. *Christopher Lehault, creative director, Spiewak*

Like the Wu said: "Clark Wallabies, son" *Nobody, producer, Ubiquity Recordings*

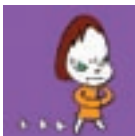


Nike Laser 'Cause hip-hop is about to get Victorian in its obsession with status. *Abe Burmeister, Abstract Dynamics*

BEST T-SHIRT LINE

All of 'em/none of 'em Let's face it—there are millions of cute/clever t-shirt designs out there. As a culture, we've pretty much got cool t-shirts covered. Now on to eliminating world poverty. *Kevin Grady, GUM Magazine*

American Apparel They make the best-made t-shirts with the most comfortable designs and the best working practices/politics in the industry. *Daedelus, producer/dandy*



2K or Braveland 2K rocks with their designs, although their volume of offerings has gotten out of control this year. Braveland is like what one great designer would do for 2K. *Christopher Lehault, creative director, Spiewak*

Tonite (UK t-shirt line) *James Friedman, Output Records US, freelance journalist*

Fruit of the Loom *Bryan Whalen, Look Records*

BEST STYLE TREND

Thugs who wear pink *Kate Sennert, Tokion magazine*

Funky conservatism All old-man coats, V-neck sweaters, pipes with cherry tobacco. *Bryan Whalen, Look Records*



Fake Murakami Louis Vuitton Making Canal Street look like a giant pastel Japanese flower/bunny exploded all over the sidewalk is kind of awesome in a very society-leveling kind of way. I love seeing really trashy women wearing fake Adidas shell toes (check for the four stripes), with a J-Lo velour jumpsuit on the subway, rocking a very poor imitation of a \$1500 purse. *David Monterroso, marketing slave, Spiewak*

Dudes in Brooklyn who look like they got their entire outfit by collecting clothes off the floor of a men's shelter Sweat pants, sweat outfits, ripped up Cross Colors jackets, bandanas and Jesus hair. It takes the concept of Ugly Hot to a bold new level, and if you do not embrace this, you're an aesthetic asshole or super-old. *Jessica Hopper, Hopper PR*

The return of big ol' dookie earrings Can a comeback for dookie gold ropes be far behind? Slick Rick and Big Daddy Kane can't wait for it, and neither can I. *DJ Enki, Future Primitive Sound*

Stripes Still. *Anna Chapman, freelance journalist*

WORST STYLE TREND

Nike Dunks They were wack when they first came out and they are even weaker on the feet of every 35-year-old wannabe-17-year-old ad exec. If you need to wear sweatshop shoes, then at least make sure they have the Air in them, you know? *Abe Burmeister, Abstract Dynamics*

For being the only damn sneaker in the Lower East Side. When you start owning four or five different colorways, it's time to change it up a little bit. *David Monterroso, marketing slave, Spiewak*



Those velour bronze/gold/violet/yellow jogging suits that hip-hop cats wear in the clubs Best leave it in your closet for another 40 years for your retirement in Florida. *Aaron Michelson, Ubiquity Records*

The proliferation of Neighborhoodies *Tara Rodgers, musician, Pinknoises.com*

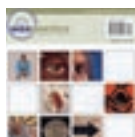


The Interpol shirt-and-tie-and-moptop Your boss at Kinko's called. They're looking for their toner boy. *Heath K. Hignight, freelance journalist*

Thong panties deliberately sticking out of the pants We got it, honey: you'll give it up to anyone who stands to piss. *Maya Duani, System Recordings*

BEST MEDIA ITEM (BOOK, MOVIE, DVD)

Magazine: RES Best music/videos and DVD included! *King Britt, producer, FiveSixMedia*



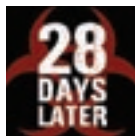
Magazine: Wax Poetics I love *XLR8R*, but when I'm looking for articles about the inspirations for hip-hop, I look to this elusive magazine. Only printed about four times a year, this magazine is the bible for crate-diggers everywhere. Tributes to Weldon Irvine, elaborate James Brown discographies, tips on record hunting and cleaning your old dusty vinyl, and quality presentation. A magazine you hang onto like you would hang onto *National Geographic* circa 1977. *Adam Kurzawa, Giant Step*

Magazine: Big Daddy Rising from the ashes of the late, great *Grand Royal* comes *Big Daddy*. Nobody fills the void of an insightful, hidden-history-exposing hip-hop magazine like George Mahood, the P Brothers, and their band of cohorts. Let's hope this project is around for the long haul, because people need to read what these folks are writing. *DJ Enki, Future Primitive Sound*



Movie: Lost in Translation I almost cried when My Bloody Valentine came on. *Bryan Whalen, Look Records*

Movie: Morvern Callar and Demonlover For pointing the way to a new art-film renaissance. *Ken Miller, Tokion magazine*



Movie: 28 Days Later Blood-puking zombies are on the loose. Too bad mommy and daddy aren't alive to help you. They're already getting slobbered at the great pub in the sky. Irvine Welsh's digitally shot stress-fest was a zinger, no doubt. But the biggest scare came in the form of the CK model/leading man. Us Yanks have enough to worry about. Ashton this, Justin that. *Carleton Curtis, freelance journalist*

DVD: Slayer War at the Warfield *Jon Berry, Regenerate Industries*

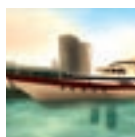
Book: The People's History of the United States (Perennial) by Howard Zinn Marvel at how we are repeatedly suckered and manipulated. *Gerald Kelleher, freelance journalist*



TV/Cable: The Office on BBC America An absolutely perfect comedy series. *Kevin Grady, GUM Magazine*

BEST VIDEO GAME

September 12 See: <http://www.newsgaming.com/newsgames.htm>. 'Cause video games are powerful. *Abe Burmeister, Abstract Dynamics*



Rockstar Grand Theft Auto: Vice City *Vice City* set the winning formula of excessive video game violence in everyone's favorite hedonistic locale, Miami, and added more drugs, sex and a classic '80s soundtrack. The only question that begs asking is how many people lost how many hung-over Sunday afternoons due to this game? *David Monterroso, marketing slave, Spiewak*

EA Sports Madden NFL 2004 There's really not much to say. The greatest sports video game franchise of all time just keeps getting better. Now it's to the point where I give myself terrible hand and wrist injuries because I keep wanting to play just one more game. *DJ Enki, Future Primitive Sound*



19-year-old Jimmy Edgar a.k.a. Kirstuitt Salu

Best Music Trend: The music that my 19-to-22-year-old friends are making Their idea of retro is essentially, like, nostalgia for when they were in 6th-8th grade. [It sounds] like ripping off grunge, B-52's *Love Shack*, Technotronic and Neneh Cherry, but with this really progressive, pro-queer/gender identity undertow to it. It's very exciting. *Jessica Hopper, Hopper PR*



Kenzo Minami

KENZO MINAMI: FIVE ALBUMS OR SONGS THAT I'D LOVE TO HEAR REMIXED IN 2004

1. Electric Light Orchestra *Discovery* (Sony) remixed by Air: Apart from the fact that they have the same title, E.L.O.'s *Discovery* and Air's *Discovery* can be mashed up so easily (maybe Air was inspired by an E.L.O. album?). Even both album covers have pretty much the same color scheme. They just can be the ultimate mash-up in sound and visual both ways. It can be released as *Ultimate Discovery* by E.L.O. vs. Air.

2. Black Wonderful Life (A&M) remixed by 2ManyDJs: I love it when some melancholic song is remixed as an insanely catchy dance song, because when the DJ plays it and people at the party go nuts dancing, I go, "Wait, are you guys really listening what this song is saying? Are you sure you want to dance to the song saying 'I need a friend/Oh, I need a friend...?'" At the same time, there is beauty in the "reminder of the sadness of life on dancefloor" situation.

3. Young Marble Giants *Colossal Youth* remixed by Massive Attack: So people can now really chill.

4. Nat King Cole "Quizás, Quizás, Quizás" remixed by Cornelius: How Cornelius breaks up the beat would work with the tempo of this song.

5. Bobby Caldwell's first album remixed by Big Boi: I think this could be an r&b classic—or completely weird.



BACK TO BASSICS

SINCE THEIR INCEPTION DURING THE 1940S IN JAMAICA, SOUNDSYSTEMS QUICKLY BECAME AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE MUSIC CULTURE AND INSTRUMENTAL IN THE BIRTH OF REGGAE, BRINGING MUSIC TO THE MASSES IN A WAY NOT AFFORDED BEFORE. THESE LARGE MOBILE DISCOTHEQUES PLACED HIGH CURRENCY ON BOTH LOW-END BASS AND OVERALL VOLUME. ONCE ON THE LAWN, THESE OFTEN HOMEMADE SYSTEMS WOULD CLASH WITH RIVALS FOR PRIZES AND ULTIMATELY (AND MORE IMPORTANTLY) THE AUDIENCE'S RESPECT. THAT TRADITION CONTINUES TO THRIVE TODAY IN ENGLAND, WHERE UK SOUNDSYSTEMS STILL BURN ON.

IMAGES J.J. STRATFORD
WITH ASSISTANCE FROM DAVID J. WEISSBERG

<LEFT
KILLER WATT
OWNER: Gary Shaw
TRIVIA: Megaman and MC Romeo of So Solid Crew met when they performed on the same Killer Watt carnival soundsystem in 1999.
MUSIC PLAYED: dancehall, dub, 2-step, r&b

THIS PAGE
GLADY WAX
OWNER: Gladwin Wright
YEAR STARTED: 1973
DJs: Mr Vinyl Fingers (Gladdy Wax), The Man from Handsworth (Lumba), Tighten Up Crew, DJ Cello
MUSIC PLAYED: "Wicked Ska and roots selections to take you right on to Zion."
www.waxatax.com



<LEFT
THE MIDNIGHT EXPRESS 747
 DJs: Aston, Lightening and Mickey
 SPEAKER SET-UP: 3 speaker set-ups
 facing center (10,000 kw)
 YEAR STARTED: 1973
 MUSIC PLAYED: reggae, ragga,
 soul and soca.

THIS PAGE
ONE LOVE
 OWNER: Steve One Love
 DJs: Steve, Dego Ranks and
 Scratchylus
 YEAR STARTED: 1986
 SPEAKER SET-UP: 16 Bass Bins
 (10,000 kw), 12 double mids with a
 selection on horns, bullets and
 tweeters on top section
 MUSIC PLAYED: "One Love is pre-
 dominantly a reggae sound system
 that entertains people and suits
 any occasion (dancehall, club,
 house party, private party, street
 party, etc). One Love is known in
 the UK as the 'year to year' sound;
 we also play around 30% soul and
 r&b remixes—whatever it takes to
 keep the crowd happy."

THIS PAGE
 CONFUSION
 OWNER: Magic
 YEAR STARTED: 1984
 DJs: Magic, Xdream, Youngscout
 MUSIC PLAYED: 1970-80s soul
 classics, r&b, garage, drum & bass
 www.confusionsound.com



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 — *The Wire*

OM: MERRY CHRISTMAS **10.98 CD**
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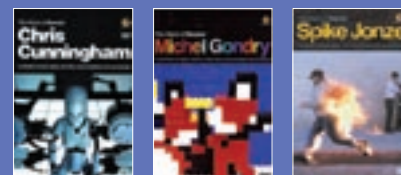


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The first three installments in an ongoing series highlighting the work of the filmmakers who have helped to redefine music videos and filmmaking over the last decade. Each volume includes music videos, unreleased shorts, documentaries, and commercials. Also included are audio and video commentaries from featured artists and collaborators, behind the scenes footage and much more. A 52-page companion book including photographs, storyboards, treatments, drawings and interviews comes with each deluxe-edition DVD.

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COMING TO LIFE ON DVD THIS FALL



Emmanuelle Bernard

Daúde

XL REVIEWS 12.03

DAÚDE *NEGUINHA TE AMO* *Real World/US/CD*
JAZZINHO *Ecco Chamber/AUS/CD*
XRS LAND SAROU *Trama/BR/CD*
THE ROUGH GUIDE TO BRAZILIAN ELECTRONICA
World Music Network/UK/CD

Brazil is synonymous with dancing, samba and Carnival, so it's not surprising that the country has a thriving electronic music scene that often fuses traditional Brazilian musical sensibilities with cutting-edge flavors. The melting pot of cultures, creeds and influences that forms Brazil's genetic make-up gets reflected in music that melds new technology with centuries-old traditions.

Daúde's *Neguinha Te Amo* shows the inventiveness and diversity of modern day Brazilian singers. The strength of the album is Daúde's refusal to abandon her African roots and appreciation of *Musica Popular Brasileira* (a pop/roots-styled sound) in favor of trendy electronic grooves. Her fusion comes across best on tracks with blatant hip-hop beats and futuristic drum & bass vibes. "É Foi Manãe Que Me Disse," for example, thrives on its rough percussion, which feels like a new twist on traditional Afro-Brazilian rhythms.

Jazzinho's self-titled album is a project heavily indebted to the music of Brazil, having been conceived by London-based Portuguese artist Guida De Palma. *Jazzinho* is essentially a live Brazilian take on the future jazz sound, and it glides along beautifully. "Sim Ou Não" fuses traditional bossanova stylings with modern jazz sounds, as De Palma tries to decode mixed signals from a would-be lover.

While the music of Daúde and Jazzinho is arguably more suited to cocktail lounges than the dancefloor, XRS Land holds it down for the country's immensely popular drum & bass scene. XRS and internationally known DJs like Marky and Patife have transported the music from the council estates of England to the favelas of Brazil, injecting a warm, sunny glow along the way. XRS's *Sarou* is a wonderfully melodic album, with understanding percussion and ear-friendly instrumentation. It has a spring in its step and jovial lightness characteristic of Brazilian music, whilst walking a tightrope between LTJ Bukem's uplifting atmospherics and the harder hitting beat manipulations of Roni Size or Marcus Intalex. "Get Back" is as heavily influenced by the house, techno and rave sensibilities of the early '90s as it is by today's drum & bass sounds, as loved-up keys and Underground Resistance-style synths dominate.

The Rough Guide To Brazilian Electronica seems like the poorer relation of the other three albums—it plays like a label's attempt to cash in on the country's rich musical tapestry. There are some choice cuts, and the packaging and extensive liner notes are aesthetically pleasing and informative, but too many tracks are uninspired pastiches of old and new Brazil. Fernanda Porto's "De Costas Pro Mundo," a lovely guitar-addled cut, and Super Águia's "Stylish," a hypnotising melancholic string ode, deserve better contemporaries. For a compilation purporting to encompass the essential elements of the country's electronic music scene, *Rough Guide...* seems to have been robbed of the passion, energy and diversity that one associates with Brazilian music. *Jon Freer*



MIDWEST PRODUCT
WORLD SERIES OF LOVE
Ghostly International/US/CD

Ghostly International continues a winning streak with this seven-track sophomore release from Ann Arbor, MI trio Midwest Product. Comparatively, Midwest Product's 2002 debut, *Specifics* was, well, unspecific. It dealt with unfolding and inverting rhythms, whereas *World Series of Love* is constrained to the sensibilities of pop convention—rhythms are more reeled in, less regurgitating. Midwest Product's taut jams traffic in melody, filling in the empty grave of harrowing, hollow percussion left by Ian Curtis's demise. The omnipresent elasticity of steadily plucked single-string basslines leads listeners through the boiling kettle-crescendo sizzle and twitter of guitar and synth arpeggios. The only weak spot on *WSOL* is the Kraftwerkian post-Trans Am/Knodel automaton that is "Bank." Otherwise, the album is a collection of airy electronics that culminates in dusky gems with murky names like "Dead Cat," "Swamp," "Duckpond" and "Motivator." *Tony Ware*

3582
SITUATIONAL ETHICS
Hum Drums/GER/CD

3582 refers to the old beeper codes of Fat Jon (Five Deez) and J. Rawls (Lone Catalysts), but for some reason listeners are tempted to look for deeper meaning in this duo's name as well as their music. Perhaps they're misled by this album's masterfully composed beats that range from baroque to Brazilian, often within the same song. Lyrically, *Situational Ethics* contains the realest of the real: unassuming discourses about cyberflirting ("The E"), diatribes on dating games ("As Bad As They Come" and "I Would Change"), diss tracks ("Loser Type" and "Look At You," a take on Brand Nubian's "Slow Down"), and even a drinking anthem ("Take It To The Face"), all tied together with sexy Spanish interludes. It's not profoundly deep, just profoundly dope. *Ross Hogg*

A SKILLZ & KRAFTY KUTZ
TRICKATECHNOLOGY
Finger Lickin'/UK/CD
 Despite clever pseudonyms implying that they are music production masters, the debut album from UK duo A Skillz and Krafty Kutz contains more false promises than a presidential debate, with far less entertainment value. Twisted breakbeats are muffled by canned crowd noises or whining synths, while a bassline hinting at a potentially funky "Gimmie the Breaks" is marred by the cheese-encased lyrics of Kurtis Blow. About the only thing saving this album are the old-school piano grooves on "Give You That," where the collaborative efforts of guest vocalists Obi and Real Elements make for a worthwhile track. *Jenn Marston*

BIZ MARKIE
WEEKEND WARRIOR
Tommy Boy/US/CD

Mr. T has this brilliant line in his 1984 motivational video, *Be Somebody, Or Be Somebody's Fool*: "Sometimes you do something abso-ludicrous." That's how I feel about Biz Markie's *Weekend Warrior*: Biz was the original hip-to-be-wack hip-hop guy, and any

rapper who changes the pronunciation of his name to rhyme with "funky" ("So Funky") has my vote. As hip-hop, *Weekend Warrior* is a travesty. As kitsch, it's priceless. *Rachel Swan*

CHEAP COLOGNE
JUST A LITTLE SAMPLE
Bomb Hip-Hop/US/CD

If Dick Clark were commissioned to produce a hip-hop record, *Just A Little Sample* would be his brainchild. Funneling pop culture references from all walks of life, Twin Cities producer/DJ Cheap Cologne has created a divinely diverse, devoted and just plain hilarious maiden LP. Like any white suburban youth who grew up on equal parts Pantera and Public Enemy, Cheap Cologne drops a schizoid mix of Anglo angst. Whether it's Pigeon John resurrecting Tony Danza, Slug sparring over Slayer's "Spirit In Black" or CC's cheeky homage to pacifiers and glowsticks ("Ravers Suck"), this album seems to have the Axe Effect. *Carleton Curtis*

CIM
DO NOT MULTIPLY MODELS
Ann Aimee/NETH/CD

YOTOKO
WET INK
Delsin/NETH/CD
 There must be something in the water—more likely, the air—in Amsterdam. The core labels centered around the city's Rushhour distribution company—Delsin, Emoticon, Ann Aimee, Kindred Spirits, Music For Speakers—rarely put the wrong foot forward, and the new albums from CIM and Yotoko are two more essential purchases. UK-based CIM specializes in electronica with a warm, almost naïve, quality that belies the sophisticated beats below. Yotoko, meanwhile, is yet another alias for broken-beat bad-asses Shifty and Domu, under which they connect the dots between Detroit, West London and the 'Dam. *Dave Stenton*

CONCORD DAWN
UPRISING
Uprising/NZ/CD

It may surprise a few folks to learn that *Uprising* is actually the third album from drum & bass duo Evan Short and Matt Harvey, better

known as Concord Dawn. Having been at it in their native New Zealand for years, it wasn't until they exploded onto the international jungle scene with massive releases on imprints like Timeless, Freak and Renegade Hardware that their name has filtered down to the masses. Familiar bits like "Morning Light," "Tonite" and "Zulu" represent here, as well as fresh treats like the Slayer-inspired "Raining Blood," the pile-driving "Don't Tell Me," and the Bristol-flavored "Ninja." All are instant anthems with catchy hooks, tough beats and an innate sense of the dramatic, firmly securing Concord Dawn's place among the d&b elite. *Chris Muniz*

TARA DELONG
YOU DO THE MATH
Fatal/GER/CD

Combine the vice of Peaches with the cut 'n' paste aesthetic of Chicks on Speed and the rock 'n' roll attitude of Joan Jett, and you have Tara Delong. On *You Do the Math*, Delong freestyles through simplistic, if taboo, lyrics about plastic surgery ("Silicone Joan"), trashy fat girls ("Big Butt Daniela") and scoring drugs ("Overdose Scare"). This Mexico City-by-way-of-New-York denizen pulls out plenty of surprises—indie ballads, Rob Zombie-meets-glitch beats and dirty raps in Spanish—but, like most indie rap albums, *You Do the Math* is best swallowed one kitschy track at a time. *Tyra Bangs*

DJ FRANE
ELECTRIC GARDEN OF DELIGHTS
DW & FAT JACK
THE MESSAGE
City Massive/US/CD

As he did on his extraordinary 1999 debut *Fantastic Boatripe*, DJ Frane bridges the seldom-trod path between stoner/psych rock and backpacker hip-hop. Frane's dusted funk beats are (Bernard) Purdie good, but he really excels at filigreeing his tracks with twittering analog synths, twanging sitars, drowsy flutes, effects-laden prog-rock guitars and, on "Thought Seeds," the bassline from Black Sabbath's über-trippy "Planet Caravan." As its subtitle, *Beats To Blaze To*, suggests, *Electric Garden Of Delights* laces THC vividness into every sonic element. By contrast, *DW & Fat Jack's* disc is unctuous, anonymous funk for buppies. *The Message* is well produced, but utterly lacking in character, with repetitive loops everywhere. *Dave Segal*

DUB GABRIEL
ASCEND
SAMSARA SOUND SYSTEM
RITUAL OF CAROUSEL
Baboon/US/CD

2003 audio finds urban culture exploring the hinterlands of recorded sound—it's world music without the authentic pedigree of being from any particular place on this planet. What better place to source this otherworld material than Brooklyn? Dub Gabriel of the Brooklyn Massive parties mixes hip-hop rhythms with tabla beats, melodic atmospheric scenery and Qaawali vocal urgency on *Ascend*. "Celebrate," with its consistent djembe groove, will get your neck working. Professor Shehab (of dub fusion group Scarab) resurfaces with Alan Kushan and Fumio Toshiro as Samsara Sound System, whose work represents a step forward in production and intention. Although the tone occasionally turns ominous ("Zot" and "Saffron Dreams"), the range of sounds and rhythms keeps listeners from pensive, brooding moods. Followers of Wordsound and Baraka will not be disappointed. *Rob Riddle*

DUB PISTOLS
SIX MILLION WAYS TO LIVE
Distinctive/UK/CD

Dub Pistols is the alias of London-based Barry Ashworth, who absorbed the effects of the Clash, the Specials, Run DMC, Beastie Boys, and Leftfield and yet managed individuality to some success with albums like *Point Blank*. 9/11 scuttled the follow-up, so he regrouped and began anew with contributions from Terry Hall (the Specials, Fun Boy 3), Horace Andy from Massive Attack, and NYC's Sight Beyond Light posse. The first effort was, according to Ashworth, fertilizer. Then he hooked up with Cali Agents' MC Planet Asia and a sound was found. On the optimistic *Six Million Ways To Live*, punk and funk duke it out with swipes of dub and ska. No new ground is disturbed, but *6M* is feisty and fun and plays nicely with others. *Stacy Meyn*

EMOTIONAL JOYSTICK
BELLIPOSE PACIFIC
Zod/US/CD

Bellipose Pacific, the first full-length from Emotional Joystick (a.k.a. Thomas Wincek), toes a strange line between melodic and chaotic. While tracks such as "Eight" employ Wincek's signature 8-bit sounds for a structured, almost pretty effect, others abrade the senses with spattered breakcore histrionics a la Venetian Snares or Squarepusher. (There's even a jackhammer-on-the-blackboard track entitled "Rotterdam"). *Bellipose Pacific* is more thoughtful than a mere drill & bass exercise—most tracks meander between the two extremes, with lush strings and moody melodies advancing and retreating unexpectedly from the complicated drum patterns. *Anna Balkrishna*

GRAND BUFFET

CIGARETTE BEACH
Grand Buffet/US/CD
 Sometimes an album is so silly it's hard to tell whether it's crap or brilliant, and *Cigarette Beach* from Pittsburgh-based rap duo Grand Buffet certainly elicits some head-scratching. Is it a sly indictment of pop culture? An all-night dance party soundtrack? Cheap fodder for the novelty bin? Matt and Nate Kukla (the alter-egos of Jarrod Weeks and Jackson O'Connell-Barlow) deliver minimal electro beats and intentionally cheesy synths overlaid with so-bad-they're-good rhymes about everything from laser tag to lemonade recipes. It's total crap, but the kind of crap that will make you dance around wearing gold pumps and waving a Pabst Blue Ribbon. Therefore, brilliant! *Anna Balkrishna*

GREANS
GREENLIGHT DISTRICT
Outtanowhere/US/CD

Multi-MC groups have a tendency to sound concocted and disjointed, but not Greans. They come off as organic, as if you were on the periphery of a skilled cipher with the MCs comfortably trading thoughtful, cohesive flows. On "Funky," Greans pays homage to their roots as Ohio players over a suitably funk-ed-out track. Meds and DJ Pioneer hold down the production duties (with help from fellow Ohio native Fat Jon on "Regrets" and Preme Ohio on the title track), giving the record a decidedly jazzy vibe overall. And although the sex rhymes on "Actin'" won't be everyone's cup of T&A, the MCs' flows always complement the tracks perfectly. *Ross Hogg*

HYMIE'S BASEMENT
HYMIE'S BASEMENT
Lex/UK/CD

MS. JOHN SODA
WHILE TALKING
Morr Music/GER/CD
 A sensational side project, Hymie's Basement is Jonathan Wolf (of Anticon and cLOUDDAD fame) matching wits effectively with Andrew Broder (a.k.a. Fog). Anti-rapper Wolf's nerdy sing-song and Dylan-esque inflections are creatively on par with Broder's quirky production. The latter's reflective pianos, acoustic guitars, sluggish beats, and eerie atmospherics suitably frame Wolf's insightful, poetic observations. Ms. John Soda (The Notwist's Micha Archer and Couch's Stefanie Böhm) falls a bit short of their debut, *No P or D. While Talking* is a more experimental EP featuring urgent guitar pop and spoken word, plus a medley-remix of tracks by Anticon's Subtle. *Liz Cordingley*

JEL
GREENBALL II
white label/US/CD

Oakland abstract hip-hop crew Anticon's secret weapon is the Chicago-born producer Jel, a master of the SP1200 sampler and widely regarded as a wizard of hip-hop production. The follow up to 2002's Mush release *Greenball* is *Greenball II: Proud Parent of a US Marine*, a self-released limited edition CD. Raw instrumental beats fresh out of the SP are layered with strange Marine Corps training dialogue. The outcome is like a homemade sonic collage, messy and unorganized, but also touching and brilliant at times. Included is Jel's sublime remix of DJ Krush's "Zen Approach," a treat for Jel fans and anyone interested in the future of instrumental hip-hop. *DJ Anna*

KOMA AND BONES
SHUTTERSPEED
TGR/UK/CD

After a few half-hearted attempts at living up to their reputation as the UK's favorite breakbeat remixers, we are treated to the experimental side of Koma and Bones on their second full-length release. Most tracks are danceable experiments within the traditional nu-skoool framework, featuring melancholic undertones and the punchy bass and snares that are K&B's trademark. Without the pressure of entertaining the dancefloor, the duo are free to create tracks like "Flip Flop" and "Pusherman," experiments with old school electro beats that display the versatility of these talented producers. *Miranda Franks*

LAIKA
WHEREVER I AM I AM WHAT IS MISSING
Too Pure-Beggars Group/US/CD

With the shoegaze revival kicking into full swing, instead of waxing nostalgic, pay some respect to the ever-evolving, but always consistent Laika. Featuring alumni of early-'90s band Moonshake and backed by 4AD super producer and engineer Guy Fixsen (Breeders, My Bloody Valentine), Laika releases album after album of dreamy Krautrock-steeped electro funk. This is no major departure from the last record, nor need it be. Margaret Fiedler's soft, soaring voice continues to enchant while Fixsen's complex, Can-like backdrops continue to engage. And if you miss out this time, there will always be next time. *Brion Paul*

FABRICE LIG
ROOTS OF THE FUTURE
Raygun/GER/CD

31-year-old Belgian techno producer Fabrice Lig (a.k.a. Soul Designer) already has a leg up on most of his European contemporaries, having recorded tracks for Detroit luminaries Kevin Saunderson and Daniel Bell.

Indeed Lig's tracks share Detroit techno's distinct melodic, electro-tinged motifs. Highlighted by tracks like the deep, thumping "Escape From Nowhere," the lively "Galapagos" and the delightfully melodic "Thru Your Soul," *Roots Of The Future* is a stylish compendium of Lig's releases for German label Raygun. His lush keyboards, tough, dubby beats and feathery strings stand out on this retrospective of some of his best Motor City-influenced work in recent years. *Tim Pratt*

MARS ILL
BACKBREAKANOMICS
Gotee/US/CD

A lot of indie hip-hop is marred by muddy production, but Mars Ill producer Dust serves up plenty to sink your teeth into on *Backbreakanomics*, from well-done, but standard, dusty funk breaks to considerably more adventurous and hard-hitting '60s rock and blues-flavored cuts. Meanwhile, MC manCHILD lays down his credo—"Believe it or not, we don't claim to represent every element of hip-hop" before launching into confessional, yet still fairly hard-hitting and political lyrics. The Atlanta duo's formula could use some tightening up, but these cats are hungry and have more to say with their beats and rhymes than most of the abstract backpacks. *T. Vittles*

OLAV BREKKE MATHISEN & SIDESHOW JØGGE
N.A.O.M.B
Disctinction/UK/CD

There's a bit of schtick to *N.A.O.M.B*—some stupid samples, a few ridiculous song titles—but it doesn't detract from the overall package: cute, skipping synth tracks proving that machine-made music can have tons of personality. Like a lounge band from *The Jetsons*, Olav Mathisen and partner Sideshow Jøgge love cover songs: "Elektromotor" is Prince's "Erotic City" in outer space; "Fluffy the Vampire" is a buzzy, tinkling version of the The Orb's "Little Fluffy Clouds" underpinned by a chunky one-two break; and "Gul Boss" toys briefly with "Billie Jean" before devolving into electro-funk sizzle. There's nothing deep about *N.A.O.M.B* but it's damn good dance music that fans of Mr. Velcro Fastener and Mr. De might really get into. *Tyra Bangs*

MIA
DOCUMENTARY
Time/UK/CD

Nottingham's Mark Bagguley, Tom Walsh and Jamie Floodgate are three ordinary chaps who took four months to complete a debut album many established artists couldn't accomplish in ten. *Documentary* proves there need not be a brick wall dividing raw emotion and electronic music; perhaps this is why pinning these guys down to a single genre is next to impossible, unless an indie-electro-folk-chill-out section exists in some record stores. Whether they're dropping in an intense drum loop or hissing snare, a carefully tweaked flute sample or the vocal melodies that haunt each track, there's no question as to how well MIA combines multiple

elements to produce music that's both precisely written and expressively delivered. *Jenn Marston*

MICE PARADE
OBRIGADO SAUDADE
Bubble Core/US/CD

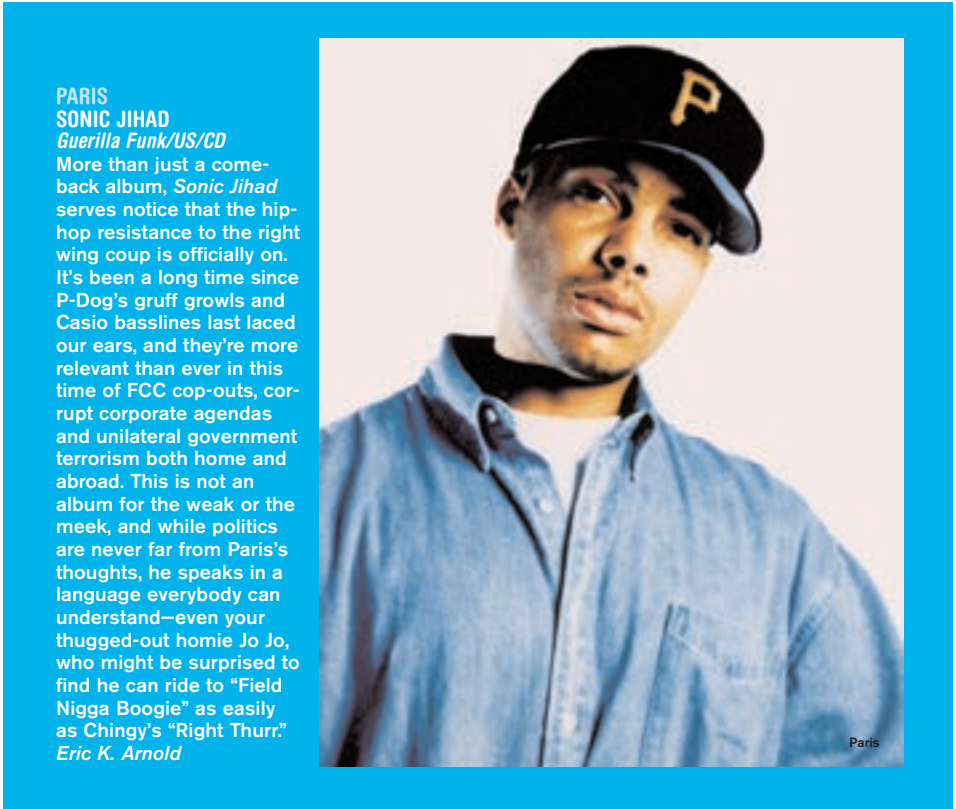
Put most modern albums under an x-ray machine and you'll discover gizmos and tricks beneath the surface. So much of today's avant-garde music is the result of plug-ins and put-ons. Mice Parade is rare, real music. The project is the one-man affair of Adam Pierce, a fellow stuck in love with sound. A consummate multi-instrumentalist, Pierce records parts live one by one, crafting shining, impressionistic compositions. *Obrigado Saudade* is the newest in a series of thematically diverse Mice Parade albums—a Tropicalia train ride along shoegaze shores, where bright cycles and waves are guided by spellbinding vocals. Reality sounds sweet. *frosty*

MINOTAUR SHOCK
RINSE
Melodic/UK/CD

Listening to the opening track of the new Minotaur Shock record, "4-6 Tops," is akin to sitting at one end of a long corridor listening to Herbie Hancock being played at the other, whilst a huge sound system in the middle spews forth clattering beats and bass booms. This avalanche of seemingly disparate sounds and influences continues unabashed throughout *Rinse*—which compiles the vinyl-only tracks released prior to David Edwards's 2001 debut, *Chiff Chaffs And Willow Warblers*. Edwards's enthusiasm for experimentation shines through. These old tracks sound good as new—even upon listening to them multiple times, you hear stuff you've never heard before—which makes *Rinse* stand-out all the more amidst most contemporary electronica. *Dave Stenton*

JACKIE MITTOO & THE SOUL BROTHERS
LAST TRAIN TO SKAVILLE
Soul Jazz/UK/CD

Jackie Mittoo's dossier is so thick you'll be shocked that you never heard of him before. Mittoo helped found the Skatalites at age 15, became the musical director at Clement "Coxsone" Dodd's legendary Studio One label in the mid-'60s, and wrote the music for the Soul Brothers, with whom he appears on this reissue of tracks from 1965 to 1967. *Last Train to Skaville* documents a key transition between the faster rhythms of ska and the lazier grooves of rocksteady. It's full of Mittoo's organ bubbles and kinky syncopation that veers between traditional sounds and '60s kitsch, as with their cover of the James Bond theme and the Latin shakers on "Sufferers Choice!" It's not necessarily a record for the novice, but still dramatic evidence of where bands like the Specials, the English Beat and even No Doubt picked up their sound. *Tyra Bangs*



PARIS
SONIC JIHAD
Guerilla Funk/US/CD
 More than just a come-back album, *Sonic Jihad* serves notice that the hip-hop resistance to the right wing coup is officially on. It's been a long time since P-Dog's gruff growls and Casio basslines last laced our ears, and they're more relevant than ever in this time of FCC cop-outs, corrupt corporate agendas and unilateral government terrorism both home and abroad. This is not an album for the weak or the meek, and while politics are never far from Paris's thoughts, he speaks in a language everybody can understand—even your thugged-out homie Jo Jo, who might be surprised to find he can ride to "Field Nigga Boogie" as easily as Chingy's "Right Thurr." *Eric K. Arnold*



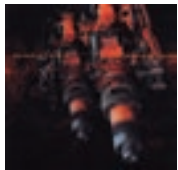
Daniel Bell

DANIEL BELL
BLIP, BLURP, BLEEP
Logistic/FRA/CD

Many a rock writer has shrugged off electronic music as just “blips and bleeps,” so it’s fitting that Daniel Bell reclaims the pejoratives on this retrospective of his minimalist acid classics. *Blip, Blurp, Bleep* is composed mostly of tracks Bell released under his DBX alias in the early-to-mid-’90s on labels like Accelerate and Klang—a few tunes are more recent, like “Rhodes 2” from Logistic’s 2002 compilation *Post Office*. The bulk of the comp is built on little more than a kick and a shimmer, as sinewave spools unravel and wrap bass pulses in trebly straightjackets. On “Work that Shit!” and “Losing Control,” Bell makes rave clichés new with ominous vocal processing. Bleeping excellent. *Philip Sherburne*

MOCHIPET

COMBAT
Violent Turd/NZ/CD
 “Mash-ups are so 2002,” you carp? Consider Mochipet’s *Combat*. His gimmick is to shotgun-wed two or more artists with related names. Witness prog rockers Yers have a shouting match with Canuck punks NoMeansNo, and Johnny Cash (R.I.P.) croon over a Cash Money Millionaires beat. Fortunately, Mochipet’s DSP sorcery elevates *Combat* above the sloppy din of the 2 *Many DJs* series. He has Captain Beefheart recite ysergic poetry over drill ‘n’ bass, and also causes a Holiday Inn-jazz cover of Aphex Twin’s “Come To Daddy” to fall into an epileptic fit with the Thompson Twins. *Combat* proves that mash-ups are too pleasurable to be a fad. *Cameron Macdonald*



MONOLAKE
MOMENTUM
Imbalance Computer Music/GER/CD

If Monolake’s 2001 album *Cinemascope* was the soundtrack to a rhythmically placid, melancholic dream state, *Momentum* is a marvelous technoid nightmare. Robert Henke, now creatively independent from former collaborator Gerhard Behles, pushes Monolake’s percussive echo dub into the depths of mechanized Detroit techno with an unrelenting grip, shaking from techno all the progressive puffery of the last six years. “Atomium”’s majestic bass, timpani and wooden percussion ride the fine line between tribal and martial rhythms, further propelled by cascading synth shimmering; so too with “Excentric,” where a devilishly nimble sub-bassline juggles stridently under a theme based on ass-nant major second chords. *Momentum* is techno recontextualized for malevolent emotions. *Heath K. Hignight*

MORCHEEBA
PARTS OF THE PROCESS
Reprise/US/CD

Laidback guitar noodling fed through a well-worn wah pedal. Smoky, low-key vocals about loss, desolation and mistakes. Clean beats bumping lightly in the background. In other words, the usual Morcheeba fare, and what else would you expect from a “best of”? “Tape Loop” gets a crunchy upgrade, “Undress Me Now” is still an acoustic softie and “Moog Island” retains its initial floating-through-space sonic ambience. But this disc is preaching to the converted, some of whom are still waiting for Portishead to get off their lazy asses and make another album. And, while you may call this trip-hop, it’s about as psychedelic as a night spent at Starbucks. If you’re looking to put the trip back into your hop, grab DJ Shadow’s definitive singles retrospective *Preemptive Strike* instead. *Scott Thill*

ALI SHAHEED MUHAMMED

SHAHEEDULLAH AND STEREOTYPES
Garden Seeker/US/CD
 With *Shaheedullah and Stereotypes*, former Tribe Called Quester Ali Shaheed Muhammad ventures into new aesthetic and spiritual terrain—always a risky endeavor. He wants to make message music without conking you over the head; he wants to create an organic, jazzy tone without alienating his hip-hop fanbase. Thus the album starts with a kind of Gregorian chant (“The Cow”), which bleeds into groovy, if slightly soppy, numbers like “All Right (Aight).” Five tracks in, I wanted Mr. Muhammad to bring the funk back, but I have a low threshold for melodic, gushy stuff. Fans of R&B or neo-soul might really dig this album. *Rachel Swan*



NIKAKOI
SENTIMENTAL
WMF/GER/CD

Sentimental feels like the soundtrack to a ’60s movie about the distant future, but it’s not retro. Rather, Nikakoi’s shiny robot melodies and lilting chimes give the entire record a sense of optimism and bittersweet nostalgia at the same time, while twittering machined beats insinuate plots involving personified computers. It’s a rather lovely record, full of mysterious atmospheres that will please fans of the Aphex Twin’s *Selected Ambient Works 2*. Perfect for listening to late, late at night, or very early in the morning. *T. Vittles*

ONEL
DAS NONSTOP-PROGRAM
BONES DOMINGO
BONES DOMINGO
CLIP

MITCH DAVIS BACKGROUND MUSIC FOR FOREGROUND PEOPLE
Res Freq/US/CD
 Props to producers who are so prolific that they need multiple monikers to handle all their output. Case in point: Mitch Davis of the Res Freq label, who offers a startling collection of “artist” albums under a variety of aliases—OneL, Bones Domingo and Clip among them. Party people get OneL’s *Das Nonstop-Programm*, a lighthearted electro-fro-music-nerds foray that includes a cover of Michael Jackson’s “Wanna Be Startin’ Somethin’.” Fans of college radio and fashionable haircuts get Bones Domingo’s hybridization of acoustic indie rock and electronic downbeat, while serious brainiacs will gravitate towards the wintry bleep-n-click maneuvers of *Clip and Background Music for Foreground People*. *Anna Balkrishna*



PITMAN
IT TAKES A NATION OF TOSSERS
Son Records/UK/CD

Hip-hop loves a good gimmick. Kool Keith: Sex freak. Ol’ Dirty Bastard: Mentally ill baby daddy. And now Pitman: Northern coal miner obsessed with tea and biscuits. Toeing the line between comedy and dead seriousness, Pitman’s debut album, *It Takes a Nation of Tossers*, is that rare beast that contains joke raps and out-and-out club bangers, and actually pulls it off. On one of the album’s signature tracks, “Twat Farm Revisited,” Pitman whines about “trendy mothers driving Minis, playing Coldplay and drinking coffee” over a funky chicken break and some good old-fashioned boom bap. Like The Streets, Pitman is obsessed with banalities—but this means buying scouring pads, coal mining, complaining, drinking tea and doing the running man. It’s not for everyone, but Anglophiles, UK hip-hop heads, and anyone who loves a good plot should apply. *Vivian Host*

PLEJ
ELECTRONIC MUSIC FROM THE SWEDISH LEFTCOAST
Exceptional/UK/CD

Built on its bedrock of solid basslines, Plej (pronounced “play”) builds jazz-house skyscrapers that hover playfully over the hard techno that has defined Sweden for a decade or so. Part of the Gothenburg (“Gonkyburg”) scene, Arvid and Erik Niklasson perfectly complement the likes of Hollow Recordings, Swell Session and Dot label refugee Jonas Quant. In fact, it is Quant’s quirky influence that makes for especially strong cuts like “Jabo’s Night Out,” where electro archetypes lunge forward. At times Plej flits a bit too close to the vocal-house sun, but otherwise successfully reaches the right heights. *Dan Sicks*

GHISLAIN POIRIER
BEATS AS POLITICS
Chocolate Industries/US/CD

For those familiar only with Poirier’s minimal techno releases on 12k and intr_ersion, this Montreal native’s latest release will provide more than its share of surprises. While the pristine production and spacious, dubbed-out feel of his earlier releases is once again in full-force, *Beats As Politics* throws a spotlight on Poirier’s considerable talent for elegantly fractured hip-hop. Featuring the intricate rhymes of such MCs as Diverse and the Francophone rapper Seba, the record is political in its lyrical content, samples and beats. Like a more languid DJ/rupture or Mutamassik, Poirier infuses his tracks with North African melodies and instrumentation for a headnod-dingly hypnotic spin. *Susanna Bolle*

PSYCHONAUTS

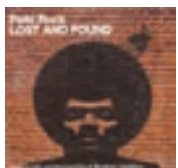
SONGS FOR CREATURES
International Deejay Gigolos/GER/CD
 Put the headphones on and sprawl in your favorite chair for the full effect of this lanky first full-length from Paul Mogg and Pablo Clements. The pair manages to take a divergent path from the now-familiar crossroads of rock and electronics, only occasionally straying back to the mundane as with the unfortunate Robert Plant-esque moans of “Hot Blood.” Mostly, the Psychonauts push forward with steady momentum, referencing the falling drums and scabbling guitars of ubiquitous influence The Cure, but claiming their own territory through judicious use of effects (“Fear is Real”), and coolly stylish guest vocals (“World Keeps Turning” featuring Jason Rowe). *Peter Nicholson*

QUINOLINE YELLOW

CYRIACK PARASOL EP
Skam/UK/CD
 Does this review really matter? It’s on Skam, Autechre may have touched it once, plus there’s a track atavistically and cryptically entitled “eu jach”—a veritable checklist of requirements guaranteed to cause IDM completists worldwide to foam at the mouth. That’s a shame, because the music of Quinoline Yellow stretches far beyond clichés. *Cyriack Parasol* is a freshly reconfigured remembrance of 1996 Warp/GPR/Rephlex-era electronics that sounds almost old-timey with its total lack of DSP effects and laptop-spliced beats. Still, it confidently clatters along crisply with visionary outbursts of melody and constantly evolving soundscapes. This one’s not a skam at all. *Brion Paul*

SOPHIE RIMHEDEN

HI-FI
Mitek/SWE/CD
 Sophie Rimheden sounds like what the much maligned electro-clash genre should if its artists were down, *really* down, with sounds ranging from Brit New Waver DMX Krew to vintage electronic styles such as Italo disco and freestyle, as well as the shuffle groove of Cologne’s Kompakt Records. And, man, does Rimheden sing her heart out. Sure, her voice grows a wee tiresome near the end, when her Sci-Fi voice processor’s preset hasn’t been altered over the course of an hour. But Rimheden’s album stands out as a uniquely European amalgam of club music, which also truly feels like the individual embodiment of one woman’s singular sonic vision: Hi-Fi redefined. *Brion Paul*



PETE ROCK
UNDERGROUND HIP-HOP SOUL CLASSICS
BBE/UK/2XCD

Don’t let the convoluted title fool you—this double LP is the real deal. As part of BBE’s new Lost and Found Series, *Underground Hip-Hop Soul Classics* consists of two never-before-released and long-sought-after albums by INI and Deda, two projects produced by seminal beat maestro Pete Rock in the mid-to-late-’90s. INI (Rob-O and Grap Luva) and Deda—both known for verses on various Pete Rock and CL Smooth



AL-HACA SOUNDSYSTEM
INEVITABLE
Different Drummer/GER/CD

The bad news: anyone expecting the same minimalist brutality and ragga bounce of Al Haca Soundsystem’s devastating single “Killer” may find this German outfit’s debut album overly polite. This is no The Bug, and He-Man’s Cookie Monster grows grace only one track on the album. The good news: *Inevitable* shows the four-piece to be master crafters of deep digital dub. More cushioned than Sterotyp, *Inevitable* pairs deejays like Ras MC-Tweed, Mr. V, and even Sizzla with billowing ambient dub of the Rhythm & Sound school, coloring the whole thing with a rosy glow. *Philip Sherburne*

joints—come with flavorful rhymes over Rock’s classic warm, soulful beats. For classic hip-hop enthusiasts this is a fabulous mini-time warp back to the year 1994. *DJ Anna*

ROB SMITH

UP ON THE DOWNS
Grand Central/UK/CD
 As half of definitive early-’90s acts Smith & Mighty and More Rockers, Rob Smith was largely responsible for bringing reggae and dub influences into the burgeoning electronic dance scene. On *Up On the Downs*, Smith occasionally speaks to the clubber—notably on a patois-heavy bass-monster known as “Question”—but mostly concentrates on pensive vibe tracks, peppering his album with trilling chimes, airy electronic woodwinds and, at one point, a miasma of rock guitars. All 12 tracks are more tasteful and toothsome than most downtempo fare, but knowing Smith’s talent with low-end frequencies, one might have hoped for something more raw. *Vivian Host*

SASCHA FUNKE

BRAVO
Bpitch Control/GER/CD
 After turning out dozens of singles and compilation tracks for labels like Kompakt and Ellen Allien’s Bpitch, Berlin’s Sascha Funke triumphs with his first album, which effortlessly ranges from blistering acid to bleeding-heart electro-pop. Graced with harpsichords, pastel glitches and his own plangent vocals, tunes like “Now You Know” and “Forms and Shapes” are masterpieces of melancholic pop, while “Quiet Please” and “R/ Für Die Liebe” go even deeper into the *Speak and Spell*-era splendors of vintage Depeche Mode, albeit updated for discerning German dancefloors. The album’s lone banger, “Bravo” bristles like classic Plastikman, unfurling clicking cricket wings with every downbeat. *Philip Sherburne*



DWAYNE SODAHBERK
UNFORTUNATELY
Tigerbeat6/US/CD

Step one in dismantling glitch’s static hegemony: bring vocals back into computer music. Step two requires beefing up its tinny, click-ridden sound with acoustic instruments like drums, electric guitars and stand-up bass. By this logic,

Sweden’s Dwayne Sodahberk is already two steps ahead of his brethren, producing an album that brings experimental pop full circle to its ’90s-era prototype, My Bloody Valentine. More than mere twee folktronica, the superb *Unfortunately* verily teems with billowy guitar refrains, gauzy atmospherics and barely-there vocals, confirming that while Sodahberk may be gazing at his shoes, he has nothing to be ashamed about. *Martin Turenne*

SOUL POSITION

8,000,000 STORIES
Fat Beats/US/CD
 Ohio producer RJD2 and MC/producer Blueprint join up as Soul Position, and the combo’s *8,000,000 Stories* takes the underground’s pole position. RJD2 proves his crusty old soul drums, descending basslines and keyboard samples can sustain an MC over a full-length. Blueprint strays further out lyrically, rattling off the names of cartoons and toys familiar from ’70s childhoods on the “Candyland” interludes, and plumbing the depths of struggle with “Look of Pain” and “Run.” Blueprint’s flexible, appealing voice handles comedy as easily as drama, as proven by the hilarious girlfriend-trouble story “Jerry Springer Episode.” *Rob Geary*

SPY FROM CAIRO

AN EYE ON THE WORLD
Stoned Asia/UK/CD
 Experienced global citizen turned digital dub provocateur Moreno “Zeb” Visini (half of Organic Grooves) makes the connection between his heart, his mind and your ears with this absolutely gorgeous album. Floating vocals and distant, pretty instrumentation lend the work a vaguely exotic and mysterious ambience. “Spacewalk” travels through the stratosphere, hovering several miles above an old Persian café and bouncing that ancient chill out vibration off the satellites, while “Don’t Panic I’m Islamic” documents Zeb’s feelings on post-9/11 American culture. *An Eye on the World* remains strong from beginning to end, influenced by internationalist downtempo while charting its own rich, haunting sonic territory. *Rob Riddle*

THE STREETS

ALL GOT OUR RUNNINS EP
Vice/US/CD
 Hungry fans of The Streets need only rush to the computer to obtain this EP—all the tracks are only available through download, either separately or as an eight-track bundle. *All Got Our Runnins* doesn’t disappoint—it’s the weed, not the fame, that’s gone to Skinner’s head (on record at least). New tracks include the cheeky “Give Me Back My Lighter” and “Streets Score,” as well as the title rap, whose production features a haunted house sound that just kills it. The label has even solved the problem of The Streets not actually being as streetwise as he once was by including a bumping UK garage rap remix of “Let’s Push Things Forward,” Mr. Fidget’s roughneck drum & bass version of “Don’t Mug Yourself” and—for the softies—uplifting rereads of “Weak Become Heroes” and “It’s Come to This” by Ashley Beedle and High Contrast respectively. *Runnin!* *Vivian Host*



Lotek Hi-Fi

LOTEK HI-FI
LOTEK HI-FI
Big Dada/UK/CD

Lotek Hi-Fi feels like all the sound systems at the Notting Hill Carnival rolled into one—it’s a post-millennium genre mangle that makes you want to strap on your string vest, your Dunks and a gigantic boombox, and roll through the streets in a hyped-up retro-futurist stylee. Producer Wayne Bennett makes the outfit tick by freaking out on hip-hop’s basic BPM template—he combines dub echoes, ska drums and deep bass with dancehall’s boom, clack and bounce to create an album that literally bumps. A gruff Aurelius, reggae/soul singer Wayne Paul and rapper/toaster Earl J further nice up the area with a variety of vocal intonations, and lyrics that range from party rocking to philosophical. While Lotek Hi-Fi presents a variety of flavors, the album peaks at party tunes like “Percolator” and “Hey Yeh Yeh,” which pair an Atlanta crunk sensibility with minimal UK garage tech and classic Jamaican bravado. *Rinsin!* *Vivian Host*

STRESS ASSASSIN

CARRIER TRACK
Spiral Trax/SWE/CD
 Stress Assassin makes grown-up dub for people who liked to “chill out” to Bob Marley in college. Grown-up dub isn’t necessarily a bad thing—true to his moniker, Stress Assassin’s music couldn’t help but alleviate tension via its spacey grooves and oceanic bass bubbles. On *Carrier Track*, the Swedish producer also experiments with the genre’s hallmarks, applying them to house (“I. Depth”), ambient (“Raumwelt Signal”), and even country (“Dust 13”). But listening to this record is still a bit too much like being transported into the middle of a hackey-sack circle at a hippie traveler rave—and that’s a place I don’t ever want to be. *Tyra Bangs*

SWEET TRIP

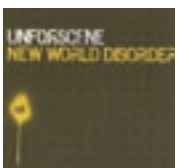
VELOCITY:COMFORT:DESIGN SALOON
IF WE MEET IN THE FUTURE
Darla Records/CD/US
 San Francisco’s Sweet Trip picks up Darla’s drum ‘n’ bliss baton and runs off the field with it, returning four years after their debut with fantastic luxuriance. Trip’s Roberto Burgos connects fizzy glitch-and-chop work with cascading shoegaze, ethereal melodies and Valerie Reyes’s dainty vocals. Tender and grandiose, *V.C.D* is dense with moments of extreme aural pleasure as D&B, disco pop and micro-house play parts. Less dynamic, Reading, UK’s Saloon crafts charming future folk with guitar, bass, drums, viola, melodic, synth, samples and Natalie Merchant-like vocals in English, Spanish and French. Both are tasty treats from the Darla dessert tray. *Liz Cordingley*



TERRANOVA
PEACE IS TOUGH
!K7/GER/CD

Expert craftsmanship. Peerless production. Fetching cover art. So why is this album so hard to like? Essentially a reconstruction of previously released material, the new LP from German style mavens Terranova delivers a diversified, well-intentioned bag of dancefloor goodies. Unfortunately, the results are like a Kinder egg without the toy surprise: sweet and inviting, but disappointingly hollow. Though reworked, *Peace Is Tough*

smells curiously dated; the exceptionally ill-fated guitar on “Rockmongril” is but one example. The album does have its sublime moments (“No Peace” and the brawling electro homage “Get It On”), but for now it’s a score better suited for Guy Ritchie. *Carleton Curtis*



UNFORSCENE
NEW WORLD DISORDER
Kudos/UK/CD

Unforscene are considered by some to be a part of the nu-jazz scene, but their second full-length finds them making like DJ Shadow a lot more often than, say, Jazzanova. The duo share the Quannum mainstay’s cinematic scope, and like *Endroducing*, *New World Disorder* stitches together spoken word samples, jazz drums, wandering pianos and occasional raps into a hazy, lazy ’70s movie feel. For being from Bristol, UK, though, Unforscene don’t show much grit or moxie, with only the “Trying Rework” hinting at the clever booty bumping of broken beat. *T. Vittles*



[THE USER]
ABANDON
Asphodel/US/CD

The grain elevators in Kansas don’t do this: *Abandon*’s airy, wistful tone overlays, field effects and unearthly rumblings stem from the harmonics of an empty grain silo in the Port of Montreal’s Quai des Ecluses. But farm equipment doesn’t naturally sound this haunted, this ambient. [The User]’s Emmanuel Madan and Thomas McIntosh rigged a massive feedback loop in the empty silo, enhancing its natural pipe-type moaning with discrete parameter changes. As such, the totality of *Abandon* spotlights the eerie affectations that human endeavors have on a localized environment. Makes great Halloween music, too. *Heath K. Hignight*

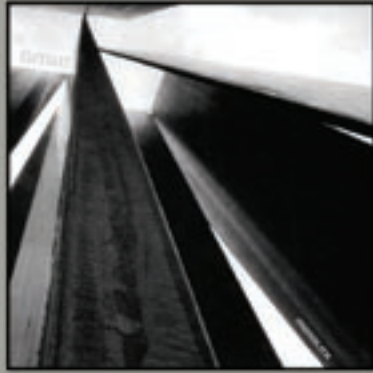
MONOLITH

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2. OCTAVIUS - AUDIO NOIR
3. BUSDRIVER AND RADIOINACTIVE WITH DAEDELUS - THE WEATHER
4. VILLAIN ACCELERATE - MAID OF GOLD
5. DAEDELUS - RETHINKING THE WEATHER
6. ANDRE AFRAM ASMAR - RACETOTHEBOTTOM
7. LISTENER - WHISPERMOON
8. CLUE TO KALO - COME HERE WHEN YOU SLEEPWALK
9. MUSH TOUR SPRING 2002 DVD

FULL LENGTH RELEASES NOT SHOWN:

- AESOP ROCK - FLOAT, BOOM BIP & DOSEONE - CIRCLE, CURSE OV DIALECT - LOST IN THE REAL SKY, FAT JON - WAVE MOTION, cLOUDDEAD - cLOUDDEAD, THE OPUS - BREATHING LESSONS, JEL - 10 SECONDS, AWOL ONE AND DADDY KEV - SLANGUAGE, ODD NOSDAM - PLAN9... MEAT YOUR HYPNOTIS, SO CALLED ARTISTS - PAINT BY NUMBER SONGS, RADIOINACTIVE - PYRAMIDI LABTEKWON - SONG OF THE SOVEREIGN, REACHING QUIET - IN THE SHADOW OF THE LIVING ROOM, V/A - ROPELADDER 12



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new releases

Mark Rochester



DJ WOODY BANGERS & MASH *Woodwurk/UK/CD* *RISING SON Son-Bad News/UK/CD*

The French, the Japanese, the Norwegians and even the Senegalese: they've all found a native rap language that works for them. Yet for our English-speaking brethren across the pond, good old-fashioned rhyme-play has always proven to be something of a cipher.

In the minds of many modern-day music observers, British rap is little more than a subset of the garage scene, a vocal means to a musical end. But for two decades now—almost as long as their American counterparts—British beatheads have been trying to configure a hip-hop of their own. In the early years, the country's style was highly derivative of New York's soul- and jazz-drenched production, topped with lyrics delivered with self-consciously neutered accents. By the late '80s and early '90s, though, a distinctive British voice was beginning to emerge.

On *Bangers & Mash*, ITF champ DJ Woody serves up the most thorough UK rap history lesson to date, collecting over 60 tracks dating back to 1988. At its most confusing, *Bangers* documents a scene where every other group sounds like Lords of the Underground. But over time, artists like Blade ("Lyrical Maniac"), Hijack ("Doomsday of Rap") and Blak Twang ("What's Going On?") helped define a UK aesthetic—grimy production, a

dash of Jamaican influence—that would sustain the nascent scene. What's more, London nurtured its share of hip-hop stars. London Posse, whose debut album *Gangster Chronicle* was a watershed moment for British rap, is represented here with four songs, including the excellent "Money Mad" (Posse member Rodney P would go on to a noteworthy solo career). Braintax shines on "Future Years," and Krispy 3's "Trade Study"—which features Real Deal and the incomparable Roots Manuva—is both slick and accomplished.

Just as exciting here are the lesser-knowns who emulate NYC hip-hop styles while maintaining their native British pride: MC Evaready's "Flowmotion" suggests Chill Rob G in his prime; NSO Force's "Here We Go" owes heavy debt to Main Source; and the Ruthless Rap Assassins—easily the best moniker the country has ever seen—bark like the political gangsters the UK never really had.

Today, Son Records is one of the many labels keeping the indigenous sound of these pioneers relevant. Not everything on the label comp *Rising Son* excels, but label dons Def Tex prove themselves worthy on three cuts (notably "Sing Sad Songs"). UK Kartel's outstanding "Takeover Bid" and Lost Island's sharp "Mic Life" show that the country's present-day hip-hop nostalgists have just as much to offer as its garage futurists. *Jon Caramanica*



Chez's Neil Aline

VOODOO
Brickhouse/GER/CD
ON THE ROCKS VOL. 2
Chez Music/US/CD

Europeans have historically had a greater respect for dance music in mainstream culture, and as a result it's easier to stumble upon a super-tight mix CD on an indie Euro label. Named after the Frankfurt club event Voodoo, Brickhouse's newest mix CD features Voodoo's four resident DJs—Marco Sönke, Oliver Garcia, The Saint and Chris Dis—shaping a tight, neck-snapping mix of deep house, tech-house and non-cheesy tribal that peaks with Chicken Lips' club anthem "He Not In." By contrast, ex-Euro Neil Aline has always been more interested in the soulful side of house music. The second installation of his *On The Rocks* series takes a warm ride through sultry nighttime vibes, coursing smoothly over more relaxed house terrain. (And apparently Chez's Jon Cutler track "It's Yours" was so important that Aline included it again this time around). These discs are two comforting musical reminders of house music's integrity on global dancefloors. *Janet Tzou*

33 RPM: TEN HOURS OF SOUND FROM FRANCE
SFMOMA—23five/US/CD

The French wrote the damn book on audio collage or *musique concrète*, some 50 years ago, discovering that tape-edits can make the world sound differently. Last September, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art invited patrons to 10-hour listening marathons of key sound pieces from conservative America's favorite punching bag. This compilation of exhibit highlights stupefies. Kasper T. Toepfitz's "PURR#2" resembles a freeway accident victim's last moment of life, while Kristoff K. Roll brilliantly fingerprints with samples of a Zapatistan rally in "Zocalo Masque." Jean-Claude Risset enters Edgar Varese territory with his mix of an orchestra slipping everywhere. Check out Laurent Dallieau's linear notes for a clear, unpretentious overview of French avant-sound history. *Cameron Macdonald*

A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE DISMEMBERMENT PLAN
DeSota/US/CD

A People's History... chronicles what happened when now-defunct D.C. experimental punk band The Dismemberment Plan set their tracks free on the Internet to be remixed by friends and fans. Lead singer Travis

Morrison's confessional twang dominates the versions—and his voice is an acquired taste—but musically the record veers madly between skittering downtempo, loping funk-flavored electronics, Digital Hardcore-esque smash 'n' grab, and straight-up folk. The compilation is a mixed bag, but the best tracks—Cynyc's "Following Through" remix, Grandmaster Incongruous's take on "Pay For the Piano"—are ingenious combinations of indie rock elements and pulsating electronic beats. *Tyra Bangs*

AFRIQUE C'EST CHIC
Slip 'N' Slide/UK/CD

Afro house at times offers little in terms of inventiveness, as artists trot out respectfully 4/4-ed-up tributes to Afrobeat deity Fela Kuti. However, this compilation offers a whole kaleidoscope of Afro-touched compositions. Alton Miller's re-rub of Jacob Desvarieux's "An

Die Adie" is a sublimely deep offering that soldiers together spiritually aware Detroit beats with emotion-gripped strings. Dennis

with Def Jux MC El-P and Anti-pop Consortium. Skronks, scratches and squiggles of noise abound; this is hardly the cool jazz of Blue Note's peak, but something more closely aligned with the cosmic chaos of Sun Ra's Saturn Records imprint. *Brock Phillips*

BOBBITO
EARTHTONES
R2/US/CD

The vibe of Bobbito's *Earhtones* compilation calls to mind lazy summer days sitting in front of the bodega on fold-out chairs, watching old men play cards and Dominican girls walk by in too-tight pants. It's got an easy swing—but it's not full of the hip-hop that this NYC urban statesman has become known for. Instead, Bobbito presents Latin, funk and soul sounds ranging from the flute-happy salsa house of La Gente Urbana's "Osanyin" to the sauntering '70s gangster soul of Three Pieces' "Backed Up Against The Wall." The quality of the tracks varies from downright funky to wanky elevator jazz, but if you still seek inspiration from the '70s, you'll find something to jam to here. *Vivian Host*

LEE BURRIDGE
24:7
Global Underground/UK/2xCD

Lee Burridge attempts to capture the differing rhythms of night and day on the second installment of Global Underground's 24:7 series. True to form, Burridge charts an eclectic course across a number of genres and styles, weaving a superb selection of house, techno and breakbeat together with remarkable style. The Day disc keeps it deep, with dubby, celestial atmospheres and throbbing beats from artists like Miguel Plasencia, Rhythm Plate, Whoop Whoop and Steve Bug. The Night disc ups the ante as well as the tempo, giving way to distorted beats, crazed vocals, and straight-up dancefloor grit courtesy of Terry Francis, Subware and Ricardo Villalobos. Impressive. *Chris Muniz*

CHICAGO ONE STOP: STAFF PICKS VOL. 1
Aestuarium/US/3x7

Aestuarium ringleader Jamie Hodge put on his Indiana Jones socks and searched out blazing funk hidden under Midwest soil. The gems he uncovered are presented as a triple 7" wax pack. Hot damn, what gems they are! Joey Irving sounds like a falsetto-rocking Timmy Thomas. The beeping organ opening on "What's the Use" stirs ears into hypnotic motion. Wayne Carter is a cat that's been rocking his Hammond at the Holiday Inn for 35 years—his two fiery blues burners leave tears shuffling down cheeks in dancing shoes. Finally, Sugar Hill is a heavy combo led by a 14-year-old wailing her heart out over soulful grooves. Why these songs never became r&b classics will baffle any open ears. *Chicago One Stop* is a testament to how much utterly funky, unheard music sits collecting dust across America. Now if only Jamie would turn us on to his record-digging sites. *Irosty*

CREATIVE MUSICIANS: A COLLECTION OF HIGHLY UNDERRATED GEMS FROM 1963 TO 1976
Perfect Toy/GER/CD
BAY AREA FUNK
Ubiquity/US/CD

The word "funk" is as overused as J.Lo's Visa, but these discs have both earned their right to the term. Each CD presents funk from the '60s and '70s, with tracks that highlight the best of what funk is, was and should be. *Creative* opens with great horns and guitars on "Mambusso" by Orchester Ambros Seelos, and moves into tracks with outstanding instrumentation, like the percussion on "Jumping" by Charlie Antolini's Power Dozen, and the organ on Dean Parrish's "Skate." *Bay Area* works just as well. A 12-year-old Little Denise sizzles on "Check Me Out," doing her thing with more soul power than most singers twice her age; Charles Leonard's "Funky Driver on a Funky Bus" features guitar work that could get the dead grooving. If you're in search of the classic funk, these are important albums to check. *Luciana Lopez*

BEDROOM COMMUNITIES 01: PILLOW TALK
BEDROOM COMMUNITIES 02: RELOUNGE
Krizza/US/CD

The cover art of the Bedroom Communities series—with its depictions of cozy suburban settings—force us to grudgingly admit that many of our once stylish and cutting-edge friends have now become soccer parents who think its avant to listen to lounge music after the children have been tucked in. *Pillow Talk* covers the latest in wokka-chikka downtempo and sensual funk derivations, provided by the likes of Hardkandy, Fort Knox Five (a.k.a. Thunderball) and The Funky Lovelives. *ReLounge* is a slightly more aware collection, featuring futurist mellow mavens such as Innerzone Orchestra, AIM, Monophonic and Ralph Myerz & The Jack Herren Band. The artists may hail from all over the globe, but *Bedroom Communities* reaffirms that relaxation is universal. *Stacy Meyn*

CUTETHEORIES
CUTE THEORY
self-released/US/CD

Not all of *CuteTheories* is as adorable as its name, the Shibuya-style sweetness of the first track, or the homemade packaging with its tiny hologram sticker. Doom and despair do indeed linger on the new LP from Cute Theory, essentially a compilation showcasing each of the crew's IDM talents. Exploring the dark side of Pro Tools, Casey Basichis and "new guy" Lee Hurley both deliver ominous ambience no doubt derived from the tensor moments of *Legend of Zelda*. But it's the delectable singsong stylings of MadGirl (Madeline Puckette) that steal the show. You haven't even heard "LA Fashion" yet, but you're already infected. *Carleton Curtis*

DJ ANDY SMITH: THE DOCUMENT II
Illicit/UK/CD

In the five years since it hit the streets, few mixes have packed more funk per square inch than *The Document*. Fresh from working on the debut album from Dynamo Productions (his joint effort with Scott Henty), Andy Smith rolls out another redoubtable mix, replete with the same funk workhorses (e.g. James Brown's "Lowdown Popcorn"), '70s soul covers (Patti Drew's "Hard To Handle") and punchy hip-hop (Akbar's "Hot Ya Hot") that made the original so irresistible. Highlighted by the best disc track known to man (Serge Gainsbourg's "Requiem Pour Un Con..."), Smith's new joint pulls off the rarest of sequel tricks: it's still the shit—just a different pile. *Martin Turenne*

DJ CRAZE'S RUGGED RADIO SATURDAY
Audio Research/CAN/CD

BABU: DUCK SEASON 2
Sequence/US/CD
Audio Research's brand of Canadian indie boom-bap is decent enough to listen to, but only a few tracks qualify as standouts, like talented MC Obscure Disorder's "2004" and DJ Serious and Theo3's "Snakes." It's really all about DJ Craze, who frames the cuts well and gets a nice lil' underground vibe going—until he's derailed by D-Sisive's annoyingly lame lyrics on "Popped." A late comeback is mounted by "Felonious Funk," featuring a DJ's murderer's row of D-Styles, Q-Bert, Babu and Melo-D, with A-Trak on the remix. Meanwhile, Babu rounds up some of underground hip-hop's heavy hitters from both US coasts for his duck hunt: Talib Kweli, A.G. and Gangstarr represent, as do Cali mainstays Phil tha Agony, Planet Asia and (of course) Dilated Peoples. Plenty to go agog over here, especially "I Got This," Bab's collabo with Defari (billed as the Likwit Junkies)—this is a hook-up which demands its own album. Together, both CDs reflect what radio could sound like, but usually doesn't. *Eric K. Arnold*

DJ RAP: TOUCHING BASS
Surge Records/US/CD

This double CD features Rap's signature drum & bass blends, but also switches gears for a foray into nu-skoool breaks. While breaks may be new territory for Rap, the track selection consists mainly of worn anthems from yesteryear. To Rap's credit, she selects solid tracks that would have stood out if the CD had been released a year ago. The drum & bass disc features more of her original productions, where ripping basslines and crunchy Amen tracks intertwine with uplifting rollers. *Touching Bass* doesn't break any new ground, but true to its name, the low-end never dwindles. *Miranda Franks*

ELECTRIC SOUL
Electric Chair/US/CD

Following their highly lauded *Saturday Night Sunday Morning* release, Manchester party dons the Unabombers have assembled a collection of tunes that could well function as the soundtrack to an afterparty, featuring an array of chilled-out grooves that gradually calm the endorphins after a massive night out. Chicagoan Peven Everett's funky, future soul-laced "Testin' Me" might suffice for a post-club boogie around the living room, while Jazzanova's soothing harmonies on "Soon" warrant a large spliff and an overstuffed pillow. Winding this collection down are the lulling snares of seventies soul icon James Mason's "I Want Your Love," a perfect closure to both party and compilation. *Jenn Marston*

FABRIC LIVE 12: BUGZ IN THE ATTIC
Fabric/UK/CD

Despite my love for many individual releases from West London's broken beat scene, some of the mixes I've heard have left me a bit underwhelmed. Not this smash set from the dozen-strong Bugz In The Attic production juggernaut. Getting rolling with two huge feel-good tunes featuring 4hero's Dego ("Got Me Puzzled" and "Having Your Fun"), the mix seamlessly progresses to the techier side of things, with broken beat's drum & bass roots clearly showing on "Time to Skyank" by Nu Design (a.k.a. Zed Bias) and in the truly massive breakdown of Ghost Records artist Daluq's "Oriental Express." A wide-ranging testament to the power of open minds, *Fabriclive 12* shows this collective at the top of their game. *Peter Nicholson*

FILA BRAZILLIA
BRAZILIFICATION 2
Twentythree/UK/CD

These consummate remixers take on everyone from Cal Tjader to Soulstice and Future Loop Foundation on this double-CD package. Each reworking shows the same elegant attention to detail, the same innate ability to pick apart a song's structure and burrow into its soul, and the same graceful élan—all of which make *Brazilification 2* a truly enjoyable, if not entirely adventurous, undertaking. This isn't completely McSherry and Cobby's fault; their standard of excellence is so high that it's truly hard to outdo themselves with each release. *Margaret Murray*

FLOWMOTION: VISUAL PLEASURE VOL. 2.0
Elektrolux/GER/CD

Combining visual representation with experimental and ambient electronic music is a no-brainer. Late-night German TV shows *Flowmotion* and *Space Night* have capitalized on this combination, emphasizing tripped-out motion and fluidity over structure in their programming, which has become popular with aging electronic music fans. Germany's Elektrolux label hosts an impressive array of experimental artists on this compilation—Iceland's Múm, Aural Float, the Sushi Club and UNN—favoring crackly, fragmented audio bits, soothing textures and perky beat arrangements rather than the floaty ambient soundscapes of the *Space Night* soundtracks. Not every track is a keeper, but highlights by the likes of Index ID and Rescape fend off the occasional lapse into New Age pop. *Tim Pratt*

THE HERBALISER: HERBAL BLEND
Ninja Tune/UK/CD

This criminally underrated London duo is thankfully never content to kick back between brilliant albums. So cats panting for more of their patented American jazz, hip-hop and funk beat abstracts, pieced together with loving care, will be rewarded with this third installment of the *Solid Steel Presents* mix series. Keeping in character, Herbaliser has crafted a DJ set that is equal parts political conscience, fat beats and humor, whether they're melding LA mic-smith Rakaa's "Verbal

Anime" acapella with a tune from the awful Burt Reynolds film *Gator*, or appropriating Steinski's sound collage slam on Dubya's "New World Order" speech ("It's Up to You"). Special nods go to the late Jam Master Jay (who gets a loving scratch tribute), the irrepressible DJ Food and lyrical genius What What (now resurrected as Jean Grae). It might not be as classic as a vintage mixtape from LA's AM radio giant of your KDAY, but it sure as hell comes close. *Scott Thill*

KASKADE: SAN FRANCISCO SESSIONS
OM/US/CD

Ryan Raddon came up in Chi-town on a steady diet of Frankie Knuckles, and survived the barren musical desert of Utah to roll into the Bay Area as Kaskade. His debut album, *It's You, It's Me*, made a large landing, but Raddon's not too busy to play with the OMies for *San Francisco Sessions*. Subtitled *Soundtrack to the Soul*, his mix includes 14 heretofore unreleased gems, notably the title track (showcasing soul vox master Anthony Green); "Empty Streets," which features the spooky warbling of Becky Williams; and the Crump Daddy Club Mix of Harrison Crump's "I Need Your Love." Groove Junkies and Audiowhore also chip in, and Joslyn lends mighty vocals to Kaskade's own "It's You, It's Me (More Vox Mix)" and "In This Life." If you're searching for a smoothed-out take on the San Francisco sound, this one's for you. *Stacy Meyn*

KOOP
WALTZ FOR KOOP—ALTERNATIVE TAKES
Palm Pictures/US/CD

Alternative Takes: a piece of remixology genius or Koop's attempts to transform an originally flaccid album into something with more character? The jury is out, but one thing is clear: Swedish duo Oscar Simonsson and Magnus Zingmark aren't about to be shoved into a box labeled "nu-jazz" on the basis of this compilation. It's full of dance-floor variety; for example, the pacifying strings and vocals of "Tonight" hit ears just a few minutes before DJ Patife serves up a floor-pounding dB&B rendition of the title track. Genius or not, Koop definitely serves up a slice of the musical pie for everyone. *Jenn Marston*

PHYSICS: FIRST FLIGHT
Journeys By DJ/UK/CD

Must be something in the snow in Scandinavia. Following in the footsteps of Finland's Nu Spirit Helsinki and Sweden's Koop, Physics serves up a heady brew of electronic jazz stylings with more of an emphasis on house. Songs like "The Most Beautiful Boy in Brazil" and "Movin'" rise above mere pedestrian fusion efforts due to their flawless execution. But the Swedish duo really shines when they rocket beyond the galaxy of *First Flight's* relentlessly upbeat feel of most tracks, as on the moody "Tie Me Down," which must be a true revelation when performed by their seven-piece live outfit. *Peter Nicholson*

POUSSEUR: 4 PARABOLIC MIXES
Sub Rosa/BEL/CD

Henri Pousseur belongs to the post-WW II generation of Europeans who instilled a key virtue in electronic music: never take it too seriously. In Pousseur's new revamp of his 1972 piece, 8 *Parabolic Mixes*, laser buckshot ricochets through deep-fried microtones and caffeinated time-signatures. Sub Rosa also enlist-

ed drone-smith Robert Hampson (Main), turntablist Philip Jeck and glitch-meister Markus Popp (Oval) to deliver "trans-historical alterities"—ahem, remixes—of the Pousseur track. Hampson and Jeck play it safe with sustained tones and lucid vocal samples, while Popp steals the show with his "ovalprocess" treatment, where CD skips and tone bursts illustrate an android suddenly awakening from a coma and then banging into furniture. *Cameron Macdonald*

STARGAZING
Guidance/US/CD

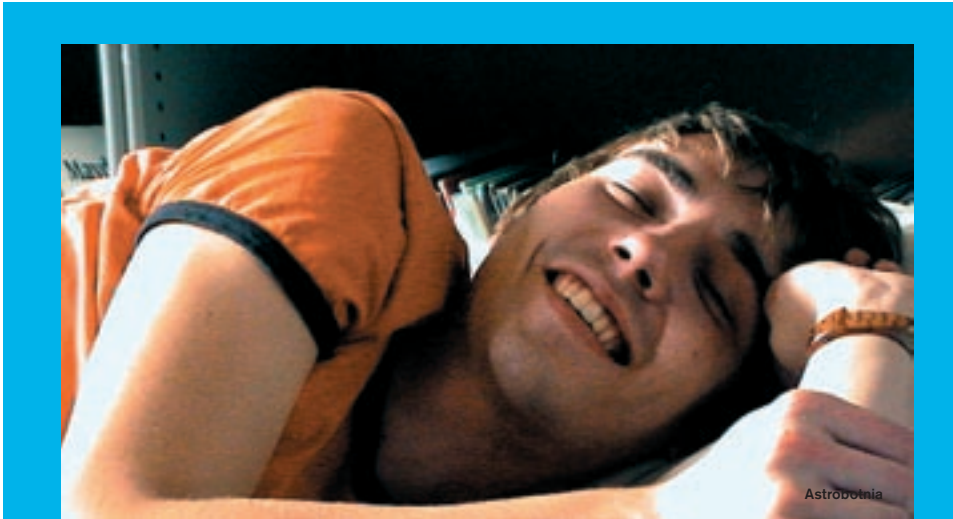
Chicago's Guidance imprint has continued to earn its place as one of the leading labels in the downtempo house arena with another compilation that easily demonstrates the label's consistency in keeping downtempo interesting. Aptly entitled *Stargazing*, this ensemble features mainly starry-eyed artists exploring upbeat synth-chord galaxies. These tracks deftly blend into the electroclash offerings of Ladytron's "Playgirl" and Soviet's "Candy Girl," two tracks that recall '80s alterna-pop outfits. *Stargazing* references some of Guidance's finest tracks over the last three years, including Alpine Stars' lush pop cut "77 Sunset Strip." Flunk's acoustic-touched rendition of New Order's classic "Blue Monday," and the collection's hands-down masterpiece, Handpolished's "One Day Trip In An Elevator," a funky zig-zag step through the electronic cosmos. *Janet Tzou*

URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAM SUPPLEMENT 1.5
Chocolate Industries/US/2x12

This ongoing endeavor by Chocolate Industries is an effort to commit to wax the rhythms of urban existence—those that are under attack and those that are celebrated—and to acknowledge the visual and aural artists bringing our cities to life. Not since Sonny Rollins's *The Bridge* has there been such a well-defined and place-specific undertaking. Heavy on Def Jux artists, this EP-length afterthought to the *Urban Renewal Program* compilation features Aesop Rock, Prefuse 73, Mos Def, Diverse, and The Timeout, who all contribute stellar homages to the street and its denizens. It's a package worth laying down dollars for. *Margaret Murray*

WIDE HIVE REMIXED
Wide Hive/US/CD

The indie Jazzy Jeffs of Wide Hive have done for turntablism what Hollywood does for young starlets: they've given it a Brazilian wax and new boobs. DJ Eli's Afrobeat remix of Dissent's "Bleeding Together" makes appropriate theme music for a fashionably dashkied Pam Grier, as she flees the po-po in her gold Corvette. Crown City producer Headnodic renders Calvin Keyes's "Urban Shaman" into something Oz-like and full of bric-a-brac, in a remix that features the verbal skills of the now-freelance Freestyle Fellow P.E.A.C.E. The album climaxes with 4AM's remix of "The Movement," featuring Spearhead's MC Azeem. Granted, there are some suspiciously quiet-stormy flute sounds crammed in the middle, but otherwise, this compilation is ill. *Rachel Swan*



Astrobotnia

REPHLEXIONS
Rephlex/UK/CD

It took this crazy Cornwall, England label a decade to release its first proper compilation, 2001's *Braindance Coincidence*. Now, only two years later, Rephlex comes forth with this extensive triple LP, whose contents reach back to Global Goon's first album, *Goon*, and DMX Krew's electro-throwback, *Fressshh!*, both from 1996. *Rephlexions* proves how rarified this label's music truly is, and how worthy it is of thorough mining. Bochum Welt's "Radiopropulsive" and Yee King's "Goodnight Toby" are perfect examples of the Rephlex sound: a warp of perky melody and punchy acid feel that is at once culturally avant garde and musically retro. New AFX (Richard James), Luke Vibert, and Astrobotnia cuts further cement the fact that *Rephlexions* is a critical purchase. *Heath K. Hignight*



If your beard-line looked this good, you'd reflect on it too: DJ Pierre

**HOUSE GUEST REVIEWS:
DJ PIERRE**

Trace dance music history to where house blasted out of its post-disco past, and you gotta ask, "Where did that acid come from?" DJ Pierre, buddy, that's where. A little Mr. Fix-it growing up in the Chicago suburbs, Nathaniel Pierre Jones fell under the house spell after hearing Ron Hardy spin at the Music Box. One day in the mid-'80s, Pierre and pals Spanky and Herb tweaked a Roland 303 bassline machine until it sounded unearthly, and the journey began. After Hardy blessed the tune with club play, the trio released "Acid Trax" in 1987 as Phuture, launching the much-imitated acid house sound and making Pierre & Co. Chicago legends. DJ Pierre has far outlasted the fad, moving to New York and cultivating his own "wild pitch" sound for labels like Strictly Rhythm, King St. and his own DJP imprint. From 1990's "Generate Power" to this past summer's thumping "Break It Down" on King Street, Pierre's proved himself a long-standing vet that's remained true to the game. "Get Ya Buzz On," his recent DJP single, features no less house vocal veterans than Byron Stingily and Paul Johnson, and rolls a phat Basement Boys/Jersey vibe that many new-generation house producers would do well to study—along with his notes below on what's spinning out there. *Ron Nachmann*

THE BRAXTONS THE BOSS (MASTERS AT WORK RMX) Arista/US/12

First of all, this song is pure love. No matter what you doin', you gotta get your ass on the dancefloor. And it's one of those records that as a DJ I play to the end. It's one of my all time favorites. Time for someone to remake it...maybe me! *DJP*

KERRI CHANDLER YELLOW King Street/US/12

As on all of Kerri's records, the drum programming on this one off his *Trionisphere* album is dope. He makes the best kicks in house music. The bassline is from an old house record that I love, and when he puts his effects on, it reminds me of a record I did called "Switch 2001." *DJP*

DJ GREGORY ATTEND 1 Kitsune/US/12

This has got that synth sound in it, and the record's got a funky deep bassline to it. You ain't gonna know you like this record until you hear the synth line—after that, you'll know it's the bomb. *DJP*

BASIL FEAT. DIGITAL DIVIDE ANOTHER WAY Pesto/GER/12

Name your label after pasta sauce if you want, but you better come with the phat. This new German imprint doesn't disappoint, as Basil weaves casual trumpet riffs and gentle Rhodes chords around a tenacious beat that carries Digital Divide's heavy-lidded jazz croon. Top it off with a more electronic remix by John Dahlback and a filtered, more percussive take by Pino Shamlou, and you've got a smooth, saucy jam on your hands. *Molto bene, sehr gut, ya know?* *Ron Nachmann*

GOAPELE CLOSER (RMXS) JAY-J FEAT. ALEXANDER EAST HIGHER GROUND Loveslap/US/12

Years after the hype about the "San Francisco house sound" has faded, the true stalwarts keep things going, as these three essential singles show. Loveslap brings two shots of vocal magic. Charles Spencer runs three mixes on

Oakland r&b star Goapele's hit that range from smooth disco-funk to early morning jack house, after which Goapele's producer Amp Live posts his own uptempo soul version. Then, Grammy nominee Jay-J takes Alexander East's vocals on a laidback trip via a smooth, strong beat, funky guitars and lovely Rhodes melodies. Meanwhile, veteran DJ M3 rolls great acidic keyboards, harmonica samples, break-downs and vocodered chants into three mixes of his party-hearty plea to look skin-deep. The Bay never went away, and it's here to stay, baby. Believe. *Ron Nachmann*

LA CIENDA HONDURAS DO THINGS TOGETHER RICK PRESTON VOODOO Amfibi_us/US/12

Seattle-based DJ Sulli launches his Amfibi_us label with a couple of solid slabs. As La Cienda Honduras, Swedish producers Tony Senghore and Martin Venetjoki run their bright house vibes around some nifty, picked acoustic guitar samples on "Do Things Together," while the flip's "Lackidishko" offers a more twinky funk

approach. Meanwhile, San Jose's own Rick Preston sprinkles his chunky, percussive house with loads of filtered effects and a distant, primal vocal sample. An auspicious start. *Robert "Boogie" Sheltell*

NATHAN DREW LARSEN ARE YOU SENSITIVE? Gourmet/US/12

"Could ya make it hurt just a little more," whisper-chants our man Larsen to potent effect on this EP's seductively edgy and wonderfully minimalist title tune. Match it up with the android-with-a-sax touches on the similarly stripped down "Made By Hand" on the flipside, and you've got some effective ammunition for the adventurous afterhours dancefloor. *Ron Nachmann*

LEE-CABRERA SPECIAL 2003 Credence/UK/12

New York house crooner Sir James could do a lot worse than having London's Albert Cabrera and Steven Lee update his 1993 paean to treating the ladies right. Lee and Cabrera turn up the echo chamber and boost the bassline to

drive James's chatty "candlelight/wine on ice/whatever ya like" chorus into space. On the flip, Gambafreaks takes a grittier, '80s-funk approach to their remix, leaving the option up to you, Mr. and Ms. DJ. *Walker Lindh*

TRIANGLE ORCHESTRA @137 Rong Music/US/12

Bi-coastal proof that dubwise house is still in effect. San Francisco's Rong label launches with Ben Cook and DJ Spun working as Triangle Orchestra on "@137," which bounces expertly between its half-time and house rhythms via a funky bassline and great rootsy vocal samples. On the flip, none other than Chicken Lips stomps out the remix a la early Zion Train. Meanwhile, Swedish dub-house meister Jeff Bennet gets his deep and slightly ska'd-up "Nudge Them" taken to percussive depths by Solomon Sound before unleashing the snapper B-side, "Renovating." *Fire!* *Walker Lindh*



ELECTRONICAT

21ST CENTURY TOY

GARY GLITTER WITH THE SYNTH DRONE OF SUICIDE AND THE MOTORIC PULS OF MINIMAL TECHNO + FAUST. 21ST CENTURY TOY IS PURE MAN-MACHINE SOUL. *XLR8R MAGAZINE*

ELECTRONICAT EAST-COAST TOUR DATES

12.04.03	CHICAGO - IL	EMPTY BOTTLE
12.05.03	DETROIT - MI	MAGIC STICK - WITH ADULT.
12.06.03	CLEVELAND - OH	GROG SHOP - WITH ADULT.
12.09.03	NEW YORK - NY	TRIBECA GRAND HOTEL
12.11.03	BOSTON - MA	THE BEAR'S - WITH ADULT.
12.12.03	NEW YORK - NY	KNITTING FACTORY - W/ ADULT.
12.13.03	BALTIMORE - MD	OTTOBAR - WITH ADULT.



ELECTRONICAT 21st century toy CD/EP



NEULANDER soul plus CD/EP



NEULANDER sea, god & money 12"



MYSTERY MEN happy for everything CD+12"



PARALLAX CORPORATION concrete CD+12"



DISKO B presents Disko B CD



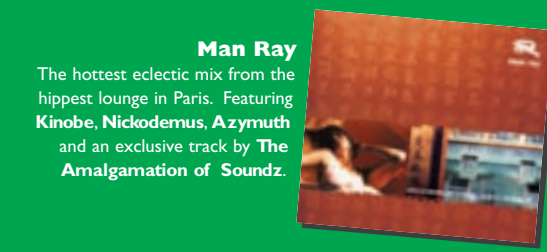
D&B are you really excited now? CD

UPCOMING RELEASES 2004: Neulander Album /// Mystery Men Album /// DISKO B CLASSIC SERIES: 1-F - Fucking consumer /// Dj Hell - Geteert und Gefedert /// Patrick Pulsinger - Porno



'tis the season to be electronic...

Chill out with hot titles from Milan Records



Man Ray

The hottest eclectic mix from the hippest lounge in Paris. Featuring Kinobe, Nickodemus, Azymuth and an exclusive track by The Amalgamation of Soundz.



Man Ray vol. III

Mixed by Man Ray's resident DJ Nat Rahav. Includes music by Martine Girault, Faze Action, Nickodemus & Osiris feat. Carol C, plus a new rendition of the U2 hit "Where The Streets Have No Name," co-produced by DJ Jacky Jayet.



Man Ray vol. II

Downtempo, hypnotic follow-up to the original hit Man Ray record. Mixed by three of the genre's most cutting-edge DJs. Includes music by 4hero, Koop, Atjazz and Nitin Sawhney.

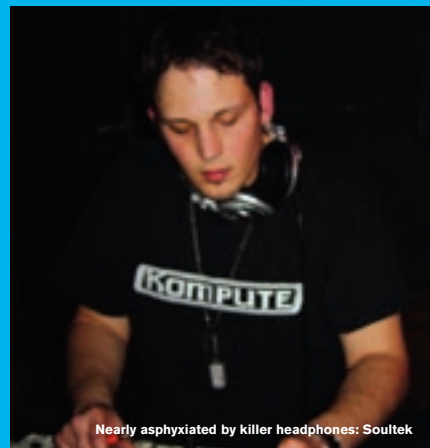
Astor Piazzolla Remixed

Leading electronic artists from around the world remix and reinterpret original masters from Argentinean tango legend Astor Piazzolla. Features exclusive recordings by Koop, 4hero, Nuspirt Helsinki, Alexkid and more!



Grooves. Part of The Complete Collection.





Nearly asphyxiated by killer headphones: Soulttek

TECHNO GUEST REVIEWS: SOULTEK

Soulttek is one of the many pseudonyms of one of Chicago's leading techno artists, Stephen Hitchell, who's been making huge waves locally and internationally with his unique approach to deep, groovy techno. You'll find his sparse, funky, Detroit-ish productions on labels like Kompute and Iron Box Music, as well as on compilations like Amalgamation of Soundz's recent Fabric mix. *PRAXIS*

COORDINATES TUNING FIELDS *Sub-Static/GER/12*

Another highly impressive release from Canada's Coordinates, one of the masterminds behind the Repair project. Expect lush, groovy, Herbert-styled house vibes with a thick, chunky dub element. "Tuning Fields" offers mellow strings and deep, lush chords, with metallic dubby brilliance over the top. A record of pure groove to move you. Essential! *Soulttek*

EP2 *Pacific Technics/US/12*

This is the second EP culled from Noah Pred's *Pacific Technics* comp, which benefits Amnesty International. Mateo Murphy of Turbo opens things up with a track that resounds in deep chord in a minimal spirit, after which Marky Star takes you to the dancefloor with grinding basslines and sharp synth stabs. Pred himself brings a dancefloor monster, which I've personally bumped from coast to coast. All and all, pure dancefloor brilliance on both sides for a great cause. Support!! *Soulttek*

HIDDEN VARIABLE POLARITIES *Digerati/US/12*

Chicago-based Hidden Variable has manufactured a release of pure class with seductive vocals and a melody that keeps you whistling as you listen. "Rain" has to be one of this year's best techno releases, and will forever be on my top ten. *Soulttek*

ADAM X GOOD VS. EVIL EP

Drop Bass Network/US/12

After a short production hiatus, this NYC underground maven returns to the Midwest's top techno imprint. Full of industrial metallic fury launched through electro/IDM progressions, this EP swims in darkness while maintaining a crucial dancefloor edge. Flip for sweltering 303s, as robot vocals announce an imminent warning. *PRAXIS*

DAVE AJU THE UNERDOCTOR EP

Circus Company/FRA/12

Opening with a solid, steady rhythmic march, San Francisco's Dave Aju takes minimal techno in hand and bumps it up a notch. The A-side keeps a straight four-on-the-floor pulsating with the perfect amount of tripped-out bleeps and audio twitches. The flipside runs with more of a creeping, cloppity, bass-heavy broken beat that makes your head slowly bob in a half-time count. A truly impressive four-track collage. *Chris Burtine and Forest Green*

CANSON HOLIDAY PLUG IN

Morris Audio Citysport/SWI/12

Amar Derradj brings us some beautiful minimal/microhouse with this EP on Switzerland's premiere Morris Audio label. The A-side starts off with the lovely "Streetbeat," full of smooth, warm tones, deep basslines and subtle glitches. "Selberg" picks up the pace a bit with a slightly unusual cord structure and solid bounce. On the flipside, "Itoma" has a sassy swing about it, and just screams out for people to shake it. Canson then wraps things up with the dancey yet moody little "Flause," rounding out a very sexy, fun EP. *Forest Green*

JAMES COTTON BUCK! EP

Spectral/US/12

From Ghostly sublabel Spectral comes a harder composition than one would expect. On top of glitchy, flanged-out, garage-like bass stabs that frame the melody sit groove-spiced vocal hits that chatter a bit of funk. Bubbly synths with random wave pitch modulations bring a different style on the flip. *PRAXIS*



Making the most of the "sorry I had to knock you out, dude" pose: the Cargo label squad

DRUM & BASS LABEL PROFILE: CARGO

Originally conceived to showcase the hard-hitting solo and collaborative productions of label boss Stakka, Cargo has quickly earned its stripes via anthems like "Brainwash" and "Echo Chamber." Working closely with labelmates Friction, K.Tee, and Skinny (collectively known as The Militia), Stakka says that Cargo will represent the very best of their own collective styles while "pushing for the progression of the scene" and showcasing fresh talent alongside seasoned veterans. "The musical style of the label is diverse," he notes. "As individual artists, we're all coming from different angles. But in the studio when we're bouncing ideas off each other, there's something there that really seems to work." With two heavy-duty EPs in the pipeline and even bigger plans for the new year, Cargo is clearly a name that's here to stay. *Chris Muniz*

www.cargoindustries.co.uk

THE MILITIA WEIGHT GAIN EP *Cargo/UK/2x12*

The Militia crew unloads a massive four-tracker centered on tough beats and futuristic, space-age atmospheres. Stakka & Skinny drop the bass-heavy "Weight Gain" before the team links up for the eerie, head-nodding "1999." The second disc is really where it's at, as the boys rework "Brainwash" into a bone-shattering punisher before making way for the aptly titled "Thrill Seeker." *CM*

STAKKA HEAVY LOAD EP *Cargo/UK/2x12*

Another smoking four-pack, this time featuring plenty of new faces locking skulls with the main man himself. First up, Stakka and Gridlok roll out the ill, drum-heavy "Hit 'n' Run" before Stakka and Skinny take on the razor-toothed "Knuckles." Not to be outdone, Jae Kennedy, Kaos and Karl K re-work "Echo Chamber" into a sweaty, nasty number that clears the way for the jaw-dropping cinematic funk on Stakka and Hochi's "Mars Attacks." Top-notch business. *CM*

LENNY FONTANA

SPREAD LOVE (NU:TONE & CHILD SUPPORT RMXS) *Hospital/UK/12*

On this "officially" commissioned set of remixes of Lenny Fontana's disco classic, Hospital allows Nu:Tone and Child Support a shot at the goods with outstanding results. Child Support applies the bubbly Bristol pressure before the man of the hour, Nu:Tone, brings on the infectious soul. Hi-energy from the get-go, Nu:Tone steals the show with a booty-shaking bottom-end and lush atmospherics to cushion Fontana's heart-wrenching lyrics. *Chris Muniz*.

FRESH DALICKS

Breakbeat Kaos/UK/12

Fresh purveys more of that cocaine-freak funk on this long-awaited platter for Adam F's Breakbeat Kaos imprint. The anthemic and instantly recognizable "Dalicks" celebrates the joy of synth pads as it constantly switches up different robotic melodies over a thorough break 'n' growing bass workout. The flip, "Temple of Doom," is an equally compelling experiment in booming dancefloor drum & bass. *Star Eyes*

FUTURE TECH TURN UP THE BASS

Worldwide Audio/UK/12

Sure to grab the attention of Dillinja fans worldwide, Future Tech brings the pain with jackhammer beats and punishing basslines on the aptly titled "Turn Up the Bass." Still, plenty of love is going to fall on the infectious flipside, "Rhythm," which winds things up to anxiety-inducing levels before unleashing the pain and devastating the dancefloor. Essential. *Chris Muniz*.

GRIDLOK & ILL FORMANTS WITCH HUNT

Project 51/UK/12

The West Coast's Gridlok shows his versatility on a pair of rollers that mine different dancefloor vibes. On the A-side, he teams up with fellow Bay Area producers Illformants (a.k.a. Controlled Substance and Angel Zero) for a punchy tech

roller that's well produced, but ultimately formulaic. "Bad Luck" rules the flip, with warped techno touches that are buoyed by an early-morning melody—it strains and releases, switching back and forth between loopy bass/pounding drums and an easy roller. *Star Eyes*

RAIDEN PITBULL ATTACK

Barcode/UK/12

Ascending star Raiden gets stupidly aggressive on "Pitbull Attack," which sounds like vintage Metalheadz at its best moments and bad sampler patches at its worst. The flipside's "Mind Bombing," on the other hand, is a compelling slice of drummy machine funk that stitches together riot sirens, bouncy toms and clever machine gurgles into a quirky acid d & b roll-out that avoids all the old-skool traps. *Star Eyes*

TEEBEE WAREHOUSE

Photek/UK/12

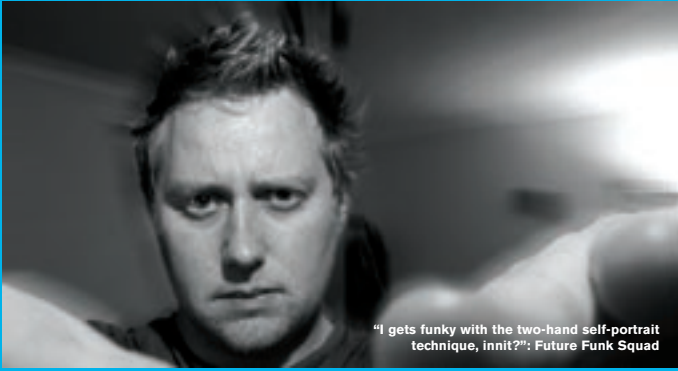
Teebee keeps applying the pressure on Photek's imprint, delivering a pair of deceptively intricate treats that pack far more bite than you'd expect at first listen. Easing into things in that classically cinematic style that Teebee is best known for, both "Warehouse" and "Bounce" drop into a churning yet inviting soundscape perfect for the heavier end of the dancefloor. *Chris Muniz*.

ZERO TOLERANCE & BETA 2

STRONGER (FEAT. CALIBRE)

Defunked/UK/12

On the flipside, "Layd Off" delivers plenty of soul-fuelled love, centered on echoed vocal stabs, luscious chords, and crisp and juicy beats. It's an easy tune to get lost in—the details are what really make things happen, as the call-and-response of all the elements keeps things evolving until the very end. Be sure to check "Stronger," as Calibre links up with this Dublin duo and rides that fine line between dreamscape and the dancefloor. *Chris Muniz*



"I gets funky with the two-hand self-portrait technique, innit?": Future Funk Squad

BREAKS GUEST REVIEWS: FUTURE FUNK SQUAD

Breakbeat ears pricked up in 1998 when Glen Nicholls released the nu-breaks crossover track "Shake Down," his first as Future Funk Squad. Since then, the man's thrown down tons of charging original funky breaks material on his Default and Envision labels, and ruled the breaks remix circuit, touching tracks by everyone from the Stanton Warriors to 2 Sinners. Check for Nicholls's stellar *NEW:BPM* mix on En:vision and the numerous remixes he's got in the works, and check below for what he's burning on his spin dates. *Ron Nachmann*

MCMILLAN & TAB ABOVE THE CLOUDS (EVIL 9 RMX)

Inflight Entertainment/UK/12
Right, then. This is a great 12" to start my guest reviews with because I've been starting my last few DJ sets with this tune as well. Although the original works rather well on the floor, it's the Evil 9 remix that really tickles my fancy. With a tight, solid beat that just drives from start to finish and some wicked little percussive moments, this is an all 'round tasty track. *FFS*

DISCIPLINE GRIN COMPLICATE THE SEQUENCE (TRANSFORMER MAN RMXS)

Bless/US/12
Bless manages to cater to both the full-on nu-skool heads and the funky breaks posse, as this release shows. This one's got my good friend Edd "Transformer Man" Budzynski remixing both the title track and the flipside's "Odditease," and he definitely delivers. With his tight, punchy beats and always astounding bassline sounds, these mixes show why Transformer Man is going all the way to the top. *FFS*

U.N.K.L.E IN A STATE (MEAT KATIE & ELITE FORCE REMIX) *Mo Wax/UK/12*

When Mark and sHack get together, you know you're gonna hear some serious shit! Their remix of this little gem is very Meat Katie (which is a good thing), driven by a rather nice live crunchy bass guitar line, and with Elite Force's tripped-out soundscapes, the groove just works so well! A proper dancefloor destroyer. *FFS*

AJELLO THAT'S TRUE DON & DIRTY ENEMY OF COMMUNICATION

Moving Target/NETH/12
Amsterdam's Moving Target label keeps its chug going with these two newies. Working as Ajello, producer/DJ Rocca of Italy's Maffia Soundsystem throws down an ingenious blend of electro, house, dub and—wildly enough—a slight New York No Wave touch. It gets both a four-to-the-floor mix from the mighty Elite Force and a nu-breaks rub by label boss Loes Lee. Meanwhile, German knob-twiddlers Don & Dirty follow up their tight debut single, "Riding," with "Enemy Of Communication," a buzzy electro-breaks monster that shares the slab with the flipside's "Normaliza," an ultra-sharp, chopped-up bit of broken nu-breaks hysteria. Jump on these. *Ron Nachmann*

CIRCUIT BREAKER I TELL THE DJ!

Dangerous Drums/GER/12
Berlin's Joachem Breaker provides further proof that he's that city's undisputed champion breaks producer. Structurally, his "I Tell the DJ!" is a nonsense, mega-funky, back-to-basics genre jam with a powerfully simple four-note bassline and dancefloor-pleasing dubwise vocal samples. On the flip, Bristol bad boys 30 Hz crank out an equally thumping electro remix that rounds out this definite burner. *Walker Lindh*

MACABRE UNIT TAURUS

Zodiac/UK/12
Britain's Macabre Unit hits us with some stealthy 2-step bizness. "Dem no ready yet," mumbles the vocal sample on this one, as piping high-register synths bounce atop meandering bass and quietly thumping percussion. One to put on way early in the morning, seen? *Ron Nachmann*

MORE FIRE FEAT. DEAN CHOCHAN

WHAT'S THE POINT? Social Circles/UK/12
With our hero Sticky twiddling the knobs, More Fire throws down a soulful, street-conscious

vocal/MC choon, as Dean Chohan croons his hook "What's the point of soldiers falling/when we're never gonna win the war?" over weeping string riffs and a steadily charging riddim. *Ron Nachmann*

NIKKIE & NYKE MAKING & BREAKING

Delight/UK/12
Following up their punchy yet conventional hit "My Time to Shine," able rhymers Nikkie & Nyke successfully revisit Timba's post-jiggy tabla 'n' bass approach with some going keyboard bits. They bring the verses raw like Shut Up and Dance, and even toss some rock 'n' roll 'yeah-yeah-yeah's into the chorus. Will the Flip Mode Squad be busting this style by next summer? Hold tight. *Easy Snapping*

SLY FIDELITY

SKIN & BONE (RENNIE PILGREM & BLIM RMXS)
TCR/UK/12
Sly Fidelity (a.k.a. German techno god Steve Mason) drops a club-killing house/breaks hybrid that'll have the masses heading to the sexed-out, hi-energy beat. On the flip, Rennie and BLIM give it the full nu-skool treatment, transforming the core elements into something far more dirty and surreal. One to drop when you're ready to unleash the acid mindmelt on unsuspecting crowds. *Chris Muniz.*

STABILIZER FEAT. FIGURE OF SPEECH

LOW SLUNG
Plastic Raygun/UK/12
British funky breaks maestro Stabilizer offers up a surprisingly downtempo taste from his new album *Canine* for remix action. "Low Slung" sees Stabe throw down an almost heavy rock 'n' roll bassline under London MC Figure of Speech's freaked future-funk lyrics. He then offers a hands-in-the-air uptempo version, as well as an electro-tinged attack courtesy label head Sam Vandal. Get low. *Easy Snapping*



True to his name: DJ Sat-One

HIP-HOP GUEST REVIEWS: DJ SAT-ONE

A 10-year veteran of Philadelphia's hip-hop scene, Sat-One has made a name for himself as a legendary graff writer, a master beat producer and one of the city's top DJs. Those Illadelphians who know of his underground singles with the likes of Pacewon and Young Zee know the extent of the man's skills. He just dropped the "After Midnite" EP, which features the Last Emperor, Baby Blak and Paul Yamz, and is culled from his debut album of the same name due in '04 on the Soul Spazm label. Judging by the EP's bumps, this cat's about to transcend regional status and make serious waves on Planet Rock. Check the man's opinions. *Ron Nachmann*

KEV BROWN POWER BARS *Up In Above/US/12*

What can I say about Kev Brown? This dood is crazy nice on both the beats and the mic. Another A Touch Of Jazz affiliate, Kev has proven he's a heavyweight, with some of the illest basslines on beats. And his chopped-up melodic piano and guitar riffs make his sound rise above others. The B-side is just as ill, with an appearance by Grap Luva. *Sat-One*

J-LIVE WALKMAN MUSIC *Fatbeats/US/12*

J is one of the most underrated MCs of our time. What can I say—this dood don't make wack shit. This one is classic J-Live doing what he does best: making good songs. If you're a fan like me, you won't be hating. *Sat-One*

TANZ RIMS *A Touch Of Jazz/US/12*

This joint stuck in my head ever since I heard Jeff mixing it a couple months ago, and I'm still singing the chorus in my head. It's the lead 12" of A Touch Of Jazz's *Soundtrack To The Streets*. I'm not feeling this just because it's my people—the fact is, it's a hott song. Tanz is one to check for in the future...don't sleep. *Sat-One*

4-ZONE BOUNCE

Ill Boogie/US/12
Word has been out on this cat for a little bit, and if this single from his upcoming album, *My Turn*, is any indication, we've got yet another contender on our hands. Backed by a laidback reggae-ish bassline and shuffling one-drop jazz beat, young 4-Zone flows a seductive club night tableau on the title track, lacing the chorus with the coy line "I just wanna know if this is banging!". Flip it over, and the upbeat rocksteady chords on the battle jam "Dippin'" show this kid knows his hip-hop/reggae territory. Bangin' indeed. *Ron Nachmann*

AUTOMATO WALK INTO THE LIGHT

Dim Mak/US/12
Now that Cannibal Ox has bitten the dust, look out for crews like Automato to take up the mantle of edgy rap. These guys' advantage: their jumbled lyrical blend of dream imagery and sexual frustration is backed with arrangements by mega-talented dance-punk production duo DFA. So check for *la difference*: those yearning piano chords in the distance, that skip in the beat, that yelping shred of guitar...and contrast it all against the flipside's equally impressive, straight-ahead funky space-hop remix by Jumbo of the Lifesavas. Compelling shit. *Ron Nachmann*

BABU W/RAKAA AND CHANCE INFINITE

ENDS TO MEANS/DO FOR SELF
Sequence Records/US/12
Babu's not the most technical turntablist, just the funkiest. On "Ends to Means," he links with fellow Dilated People Rakaa (verses) and Evidence (hooks) for a tale of getting by by getting by. Up-and-comer Jake One hooks up the soulful samples and Babu gets nasty on the cut. The flip features Babu on the boards while Chance Infinite of Self Scientific spits a tale of self-reliance with some ingenious vocal samples from Tribe's "Keep It Rollin'." *Ross Hogg*

DOS NOUN & MR. BURNS IT CAN'T BE WRONG EP

Manifest Music/US/EP
Oh, man. Two white guys in suits drinking scotch? They're just askin' for it. Good thing I listened anyway. Yes, this record would clear any non-Skribble Jam dancefloor, but you can't

ignore the power of "Confessions of a Teenage Wafrikan American," where Dos Noun blows his own spot with lines like, "Am I just trying to beat blacks at their art form?" It won't make you dance, but it'll definitely make you think, and hip-hop still has room for that. *Ross Hogg*

OH NO MAKE NOISE

Stones Throw/US/12
Madlib's little brother proves that there's room for more than one dope producer/MC at the family dinner table. On "Make Noise," flamenco guitars swell over hard-hitting drums to provide the perfect foundation for Oh No's party-ready rhymes. On the flipside's "Chump," Lootpack's DJ Romes joins Oh No over a cowbell-heavy beat to let you know that you really are a chump. They make a pretty convincing argument, too, and you can dance to it. *Chump. Ross Hogg*

OPEN THOUGHT FORCE OF LIFE

Wide Hive/US/12
Bearded Brooklyn trio Open Thought breaks out with their debut single, putting the indie hip-hop world on notice that there's a new, serious humanist crew in town. Vague though his positivist philosophy may be, MC Baba skillfully sluices his rhymes on the title track between beats by fellow Thinkers Yako and DJ Center, and Michael Irwin's nifty trumpet riffs. Unfortunately, Baba's awkward inner-city narrative on the flipside's "Cold Cut" comes off a little too imagined. Time will tell if they can bring it a bit stronger than this. *Ron Nachmann*

WANTED AND RESPECTED A GOOD LOOK

Trife Life/US/12
Note to the hip-hop distribution industry: please get this damn record out to people. In this follow-up to their underground hit "Fix Your Face," Brooklyn MCs Potent and Trife Sr. swing a smooth, braggadocious flow over a crackin' beat by Sin-Bo and Doggie Diamonds. But the highlight here is the way these cats sing the chorus to the catchy-ass string sample. Now *that's* a hook. Strangely, the flipside's drinking tune, "For No Reason," features some West Coast-style high-register strings. Regardless, the A-side is worth the price alone. Support! *Ron Nachmann*

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Go on and shake it out: DJ Cosmo

FUTURE JAZZ GUEST REVIEWS: DJ COSMO

Without a doubt, DJ Cosmo's the hardest working woman in the boys-club realms of future jazz and forward-thinking globalized house. A protégé of New York DJ legends David Mancuso and Francois K., Cosmo held court for seven years with a top dance mix show on WNYU, and she's one of the few artists to guest at both fabled Gotham clubs The Loft and Body & Soul. Since relocating to London, the lady's caught true worldwide attention with the Bitches Brew label she started with fellow DJ Nikki Lucas. Recording as Bambu, Ch'i and Jinadu, Cos's thumping nu-Brazilian vocal productions have blown the roof off many a joint, most notably her monthly Bitches Brew club night at Herbal in Shoreditch. Between all that and releasing both her new Jinadu single and mixing *The Disco-Tech of Cosmo* for Yellow Productions, there's much brewing with this chick. Check the doings at bitchesbrewmusic.com, and check her insights on what she's putting under the needle. *Ron Nachmann*

KATHY DIAMOND SUNSHINE *Cottage/UK/12*
On her debut release on the Idjut Boys' homegrown imprint Cottage, Kathy Diamond brings a gorgeous slow-burner produced by Dr. Scratch, otherwise known as Maurice

Fulton. Our favorite maverick blends ethereal pads, jagged beats and bubbling bass into a sweet, subtle funk. Sung in sugary tones, Diamond's ode to "love, sunshine and rainbows" may seem a strange sentiment for a bonny Northern lass, but it'll surely put a smile on the face of the Haight-Ashbury contingent. *Cosmo*

JERSEY STREET ALLSTARS BURNIN *Electric Chair-PIAS/UK/12*
Dirty, dirty, dirty beatz and rude, rude, rude riddims! But what else should one expect from the Rainy City's premier party dons the Unabombers. Taken from their recent mix album, "Burnin" gets the treatment from Raw Deal, who funks things up in classic '80s style. For the flip, turn off the lights and jack your bod to the rump-bumpin' basement mix from the Electric Chair boyz, who've clearly beaten the present Chicago team at their own game. *Cosmo*

SAO BENITEZ ELEMENTAL EP TWO: AIR AND WATER *Mr. Bongo/UK/12*
While his Mr. Hermano project pays tribute to all things Latin, Ben Mitchell's Sao Benitez moniker salutes Brazil with a style that runs the gamut from batucada to bossa. Culled from the *Elemental* album, the EP features classic dancefloor reworks of Los Amigos Fandango, Gil Felix, Paula Lima and Ivo Mendes, all showcasing Mitchell's trademark percussive style. Sao Benitez may be a white dude from West London, but he sure knows how to kick the flavor out of the favelas! *Cosmo*

BF002
Blunted Funk/US/12
Is Brooklyn in the house? This new label run by borough boys Scottie B and Sneak-E Pete brings its second multi-artist EP full of funky explorations. Moody Eva's minimalist "6 Minute Man" flips a bit of the Clash's "Rock the Casbah" until it sounds like it's being played by Liquid Liquid, while The Shift's "Soulville" rolls live guitar over a breakbeat house skeleton, to middling effect. On the flip, saxophonist Mike DeVellis recalls early-'90s live acid jazz on his uptempo "Post Boogie," and Miss Bliss and Sneak-E Pete close up with their decently written "Electrofunk." Solid, though not exactly groundbreaking. *Ron Nachmann*

DJ PRESTO BREAKING CONCRETE
Concrete Grooves/US/12
Presto keeps making his impressions. On this, he flips the script by lacing the A-side with three understated DJ tool-ish loop beats that variously sport distorted guitar, muted vibes and Rhodes riffs over sprightly downtempo beats. Flip it for

"Breath Control," which features smooth mic man Lowd flowing excitable early-'90s jazzy style and DJ Haul cutting it up in fine style. *Ron Nachmann*

DUAL CONTROL STONED MASON EP
THE NUDGE BUMPIN'
Grand Central/UK/12
London's Grand Central label lets loose with a couple slabs of leftfield instrumental sample funk that include a surprise or two. Dual Control's "Stoned Mason," a minor key beats 'n' scratches jam with all the 8-bar changes and breakdowns ya need finds an echo on the flip-side's "Optical." But closing the EP is the unexpectedly ambient "Spring Again," an echo-laden blend of acoustic guitar, female vocals and synth effects. Meanwhile, The Nudge offers up a midtempo bit of piano-led Prince-ish '80s funk that gets a gorgeous dub reworking that maintains the bouncing beat. And check that Wurritzer and poppin' guitar on the EP-closing "Stomp." Now that's funky. *Ron Nachmann*

HUMAN RACE HUMAN RACE
Re-Joint/US/7
Re-Joint, the re-issue sub of San Francisco's Dis-Joint label, unearths this spare, funky little 1971 gem from this obscure Miami five-piece otherwise known as the Miami Soul Review. The title track is almost garage band-like in its structure, with congas, yeah-yeah vocals and a twangy two-note guitar slide leading the way. On the flip's sly, Meters-ish "Grey Boy," saxophonist/bandleader Mike Edell strings a night-clubby melody line through the proceedings, rounding out a satisfying document. *Ron Nachmann*

MADLIB SLIM'S RETURN
Blue Note/US/12
It turns out that LA's wunderkind producer wasn't exactly finished messing around in Blue Note's vaults when he finished his album of remixes for the label from which "Slim's Return" originates. This plate finds Madlib juicing up Donald Byrd's "Steppin Into Tomorrow" with electro, floating some airy shuffle-funk through Horace Silver's

"Dimples," and running an unreleased Mizell Brothers track, "Young Warrior," through both down- and uptempo phases. As usual with this guy, we're talking expertly reinterpreted jazz soul music. *Ron Nachmann*

TY WAIT A MINUTE RMXS
Big Dada/UK/12
Big Dada continues their crusade for quality with two remix discs of this snappy relationship tune inna midtempo style from Ty's slammin' sophomore album, *Upwards*. On his smooth, Rhodes-soaked treatment that comes with the original, Detroit man Dwele replaces the guitar line that accompanies the chorus's female backing vocals with warm trumpet notes. The other disc brings things back to the UK. Fusion of "Big & Bashy" fame strips the tune down and goes murky, bringing in young London MC Microw to present the lady's point, while the one like Sticky accelerates and chops things up, changing the chorus melody into a hot 2-step rub. *Ron Nachmann*

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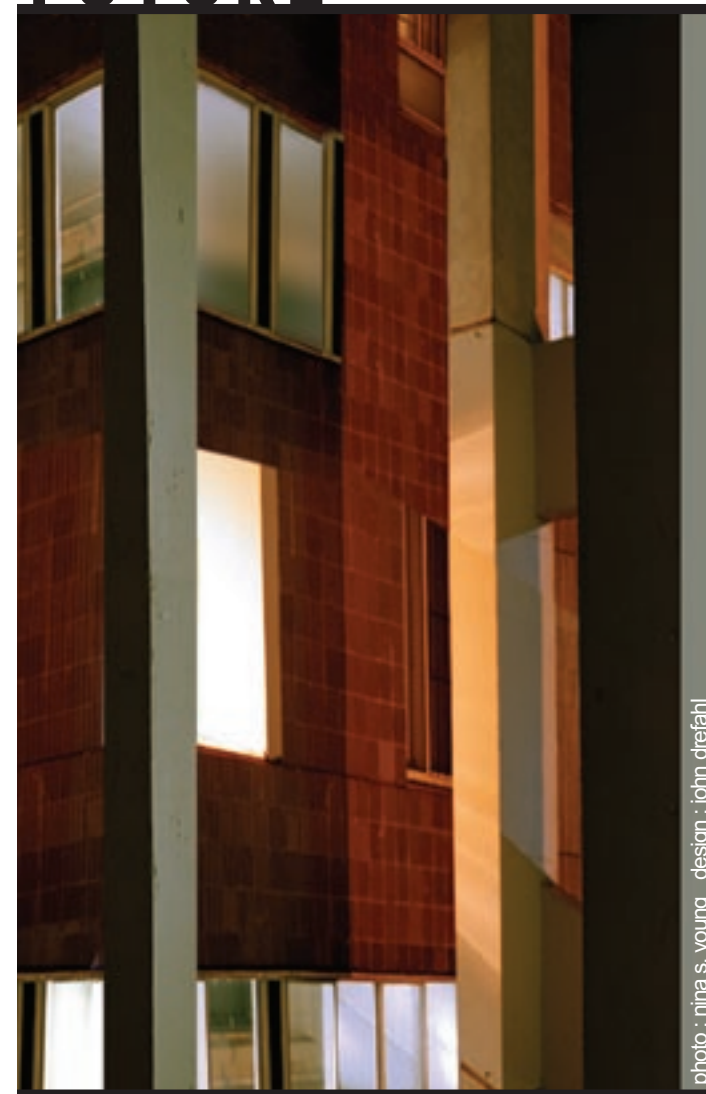


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Peek me a winner: Gomma head honchos Modica and Imbery

LEFTFIELD LABEL PROFILE: GOMMA RECORDS

As the worldwide post-punk rhythm revival charges on, Munich's Gomma label keeps setting the pace with choice nuggets from the explosive creative rock scenes of then and now. Started in 1998 by musicians/party-throwing friends Mathias Modica and Jonas Imbery (who represent the label as the DJ team Munk), Gomma has absorbed Munich's diverse pop music history to release some wild punk/electro/disco gems by artists like Leroy Hanghofer, Headman and

Protein. But Gomma truly made their name via two compilations: 2001's precedent setting *Anti-NY*, featuring originals and remixes from early-'80s subterranean New York; and *Teutonik Disaster*, a two-volume overview of obscure, unknown music from Germany's late '70s/early '80s new wave/punk underground. Says Modica, "Now we have seen that it works OK and we can do what we want and like...we do stuff with Munich amigos like DJ Jaw [of the Poets of Rhythm] or Hiltmeyer or Mooner from Queen of Japan & Zombie Nation. Also our compagneros Smal & Paze (who do most of our covers and also the poster mag *Amore*) have freedom." Recent Gomma releases have included "Cheesy Lipstick," NYC proto-hip-hopper Ramellzee's first new solo tune in years (with music by Munk); the second volume of the *Gommagang* label compilation series; the new Headman single "So Now/So Then" from his upcoming second album; a remix of Leroy Hanghofer's "Bathroom Boogie;" and "Mein Schatzi," Munk's irresistible punky disco collab with Princess Superstar. Modica notes his home city's effect on both the ear and other organs: "If you look around right now [in Munich], you have different things like Syrup, Notwist & Lali Puna, Disko B and Chicks On Speed, Console, etc....lots of diverse musicians here. But we think the biggest influence is the *weisswurstel* [white sausage]!" *Ron Nachmann*

www.gomma.de

AL-HACA SOUNDSYSTEM INEVITABLE EP
Different Drummer/UK/12

German roots/dancehall hybridists Al-Haca do us all a favor and bring four highlight cuts from their debut album, *Inevitable*, to vinyl. From New Yorker RQM's street poetry over buzzy dancehall on "We Sick" to Sizzla's Sizzla-isms over the minimalist bounce-step of "Break the Silence," Al-Haca's all about steady rootsy bass vibes and masterful vocals lording over a truckload of solid, risk-taking beat structures. This'll probably irk more than a few reggae purists, but that's a good thing. *Ron Nachmann*

ANDERS ILAR HYDRO
Shitkatapult/GER/12

As Marco "T.Raumtschmiere" Haas and Sascha "Apparat" Ring shoot to underground stardom, they're thankfully keeping the coast clear for their charmingly named label to keep pumping out quality understated experimental tech. Anders Ilar's Coil-ish "Hydro" brings barking percussion up against sheets of icy ambient wash, while the minimal and suboceanic "Moth" buoys some choir-ish sheen and the pounding "Mouthdry" brings the tempo down but the subtle intensity to industrial proportions. Pure power. *Walker Lindh*

ELECTRIC BOOGIE RIDDIM
STOPP RIDDIM
Germaican/GER/7

Riding high off of the VP label's reissue of Tanya Stephens' "What a Pity" over 2002's globally acclaimed Doctor's Darling riddim (now with another set of vocals), German reggae label Germaican comes with two digi-dancehall jams. Alongside his voicing of his own buzzy and chopped-up Stopp riddim, D-Flame hands it to stars like Chico, Alleykat and Spectacular, whose chugging "Move" shares a 45 with Ce'cile's lovely "Hardcore Lovin'." Meanwhile, Berlin star band Seeed rocks a charging synth bassline for the siren-filled Electric Boogie riddim, over which German MC Nosliv sounds his "Alarm" before letting Kiprich, Ward 21 and Elephant Man each bring their vocal steez. Seven 7" singles for one riddim in the first round—not bad. At germaican.net, Germaican just don't stop. *Ron Nachmann*

LUCK & EASY PIMP SOUL BLISTER EP
Ann Aimee/NETH/12

Mining territory covered previously by acts like Plaid and Boards of Canada, the mysterious Luck & Easy nevertheless bring some new flavor to the home-listening game on their third vinyl release. This three-track EP sees them intertwine warm electronic melodies with beat structures that morph from downtempo to robo-2-step to shuffling techno to bouncy electro and minimal tech. Risky and eclectic in that early-'90s Warp sense, this thing'll keep you compelled. *Ron Nachmann*

SMM VOL. 1
SOLVENT RADIO GAGA
Ghostly/US/12

Ann Arbor's Ghostly label continues their high-quality cross-genre snoopings into electronic music's tweakier corners with these two new slabs. Their compilation EP, *SMM Vol. 1*, spotlights wonderfully sedate tracks by new names; between the airy guitar and noise of Twine, the shining atmosphere and stuttering minimalist beats of Kiln and the meditative yet edgy and building soundscapes of Kosik, you'll get your opaque ambience on. Meanwhile, Solvent—an electro-pop specialist since the mid-'90s—gets his two boppy bits of android romance, "My Radio" and "For You," remixed by the best (including Legowelt and ISAN) over two discs. The highlight? Schnieder TM's Mustang Interpretation of "My Radio," a warmly empathetic pat on the back for his robot buddy. *Walker Lindh*

WIEVE STONDER KENYAN HARRY EP
Skam/UK/12

These Brit absurdists follow up this year's *Drawing on Other People's Heads* album with this six-track vocal and instrumental mess of found sounds and hilarious, well-executed ideas. Swinging a needed sense of humor into po-faced experimental electronica, Wieve Stonder bounces here between dizzying cut-up techno, grungy and ominous downtempo and silly non-dance pop. Highlights include the poly-perverse folk tune "Stichin" and the loping, Beefheart-ish "Lady's Leg Licked": "I saw a lady look the other way when a cat came over and licked her on the leg..." Indeed. Lighten up and get a load of this. *Ron Nachmann*



TOM EVANS 1935-2003
MASTER CARPENTER* WORLD CLASS DRINKER* MY POP

It's a helluva thing, losing your old man, let me tell you. My friend the high school teacher and DJ/journalist Greg Doherty passed along some wise Freudian words on the subject—specifically about how losing one's father is the most important event in a man's life, because now the son is fully in charge of his own world and destiny. And even though I hadn't seen the guy in many years, that rings true to me. I guess what I really regret is never getting the chance to show Tom the splendor of my life, what I've created for myself during these 32 years on Earth. The "Toph Specials" at 26 Mix or the way Ray Morrone will announce: "Ladies and gentlemen, DJ TophOne is in the building!" whenever I sneak in the side door at Fuse. As a lifelong barman, he'd just have to be proud. Or just the opportunity to buy the old sonofabitch a shot of Woodford Reserve from Tiki Jim at the Red Wine Social—that would have been nice. Or better yet, he could have poured me a drink from the top shelf at his own saloon in Northfield, Minnesota. When I was a little kid, I used to bring my crayons to school in a purple and velvet drawstring Crown Royal bag, much to the Dominican sisters' chagrin. So the first thing I did upon hearing the news was buy my first bottle of Pop's favorite brand, and have a glass at home, by myself, and shed a few tears and drink to one-half the reason I'm here. This bottle is not for jolly drinking. It's not for when the gang all ends up at my place to get loud and watch the sun come up. It's for those late nights alone, listening to Neil Young, when he is near. It's for moments like this.

Pop wasn't the most subtle man. I remember a class field-trip to Muir Woods to look at the redwoods full of migrating Monarch butterflies, and to the teachers' horror, there was Dad hurling pinecones into the trees to scatter the butterflies for us to see. A sort of homemade, natural fireworks. I don't believe the Monarchs have returned since.

I remember sitting on the bar of the legendary Pierce Street Annex, drinking Coke after Coke as Pop took measurements and talked shop with the owners. Dad built most of the original Union Street bars in San Francisco—the Coal Yard being the first—and the Bus Stop t-shirt I wear to this day is handed down from him. I learned what a 2x4 was and the difference between a 6 penny and a 10 penny nail in Pop's workshop and on his numerous job sites around Marin County during the '70s. Riding his little red Honda café racer around the tidal marshes outside Novato; feeding taffy to raccoons while camping on Sugarloaf Ridge in the Napa Valley; that summer on the road, criss-crossing the West in his 1980 Dodge van—these times will always be a part of me, and somehow helped make me who I am today.

From him I learned about Thelonious Monk, Willie Nelson, and the power and beauty of Grofe's "Grand Canyon Suite". So you see, all this musical anarchy is just handed down from those who came before us.

Well in the end, I guess the Crown Royal got him. Dead at 67 with a bum liver and kidneys. Stay up, old man... I'll see you one of these days...

"On his wise shoulders through the checkerwork of leaves the sun flung spangles, dancing coins."
—James Joyce, *Ulysses*

- 1) **ROMANOWSKI "STEADY ROCKING"** (*Future Primitive Sound/US/12*) Brilliance from our favorite Swiss race-car driver.
- 2) **DARKHORSE CONFESSIONS OF A BURNING MAN (360-Hotbed/US/CD)** Beautiful soundtrack to the multi-layered documentary.
- 3) **CRAZY GIRL "IT'S BITCHIN"** (*Burnt Offerings/UK/12*) Our lovely Southern Belle does it again, with Matty Skylab and Adam Sky.
- 4) **HUMAN RACE "HUMAN RACE"** (*Re-Joint/US/7*) Slow-burning rare-groove funk.
- 5) **DILATED PEOPLES "MARATHON"** (*ABB/US/12*) Hot, hot, hot...
- 6) **OPEN THOUGHT "FORCE OF LIFE"** (*Wide Hive/US/12*) New project from Baba of Meta-Bass & Breath.
- 7) **THE FEENOM CIRCLE "THE PAWN SHOP"** (*Melatonin Music/US/12*) Be on the lookout for this SF crew.
- 8) **P'TAAH FEAT. AMY PIKE "BALTIMORE ORIOLE"** (*Ubiquity/US/12*) Killer outtake from the *Rewind 3* compilation.
- 9) **4-ZONE "BOUNCE"** (*Spy Tech-III Boogie/US/12*) Hotness from my man in LA.
- 10) **PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS "YIELD"** (*Om/US/12*) Ditto.
- 11) **INFINITE LIVEZ "SUMFINK 4 NAFINK"** (*Big Dada/UK/12*) The UK's MF Doom?
- 12) **BRIO "CARNIVAL"** (*Cabaret/US/12*) Pal Joey goes to Puerto Rico... LUCKY 13) **Q RESTAURANT** (*Clement St./SF/restaurant*) Smilin' Andy's meatloaf is to die for. Tell him I sent ya.





IN THE STUDIO ANT

TWIN CITIES MAGICIAN ANT CHOPS BEATS LIKE OLD GROWTH LUMBER FOR ATMOSPHERE AND RHYMESAVERS ENTERTAINMENT. TEXT KEN TAYLOR IMAGE SKYE ROSSI

Ant (a.k.a. Anthony Davis), the low-gloss production wizard behind Atmosphere's latest slack-hop opus *Seven's Travels* (Epitaph), is hardly the gear whore that most In the Studio-type stories might feature. When Ant goes it alone, he eschews almost all software and plug-ins, opting instead to hash out his partner Slug's sparse, fluid beats on a four-track at home—his preferred studio environment since the early '80s. "It's nothing spectacular," he says of the DIY set-up. "It sounds like hell, but I figure if I can get a song that sounds okay outta that, I know that in the [pro] studio it'll pretty much be the shit."

The main recording space he's talking about is Minneapolis's Trail Mix Studios, where, with engineer Joe Mabbot, he laid down the tracks for the last few Atmosphere records and Brother Ali's *Shadows on the Sun*.

Ant's decidedly a studio-only musician since he let his DJ chops go south, leaving Atmosphere's live scratching duties to turntablist extraordinaire Mr. Dibbs. As he claims three different times in our conversation, "Everything about [DJing live] sucks...But I might have to get back into it. I hear the money's good."

XLR8R: How did you start doing hip-hop production?

Ant: I started out DJing in the early '80s, messing around in '83 and '84, and it just kind of progressed into production. I was working with MCs back then too, like when I was in high school, before samplers and everything. I got a drum machine and started working with rappers in my neighborhood.

XLR8R: Do you remember the first piece of gear you bought?

Ant: [It was] probably a mixer, but as far as equipment it was an RX5, which was a Yamaha drum machine. And actually, I stole that, so it doesn't really count. I never even got to work it really well. It was a piece of junk. Even when it was brand new, it was just corny as hell. Maybe some r&b acts were using it at the time. Maybe Atlantic Star or some shit. It was really bad, bad news. But since I didn't know what the hell I was doing, I got a distortion out of it that was pretty cool and sounded like some of the old Cold Crush Brothers tapes and shit like that. My snares and drums and everything were distorted so it didn't sound half as bad.

XLR8R: Do you remember what you were recording on at the time?

Ant: Still on tape. When I go to the studio now, we do it on ProTools, but way back then I wasn't even going to the studio. This was still in the '80s.

XLR8R: What's the studio like now, with ProTools?

Ant: I work with a good engineer. He knows exactly what I like and we've worked together long enough now that he knows all the short cuts and we only have to discuss half the shit we do.

XLR8R: Do you find you're getting more into the software thing now?

Ant: Nah, [laughs] not really. I still like the raw shit.

XLR8R: What's the main piece of gear that you're using then, like on Seven's Travels?

Ant: The ASR10—an Ensoniq keyboard/sampler. And also, there were a few songs that I had musicians come in and play.

XLR8R: I hear a lot of guitarists say there are a few new songs waiting to come out of every guitar. Do you think that applies to electronic gear?

Ant: Maybe to an extent, but I've only ever worked with a few things. I've always worked with the Ensoniq, the [Emu] SP1200 and various kinds of drum machines. Everything has its own little sound, but it's pretty much what you put into it is what makes it happen. Like, I can always tell when someone's using the MPC—whatever-it's called. Everybody uses that. And I can tell that Korg shit that all the big guys use. They all use the same shit.

XLR8R: It seems like the Atmosphere stuff is pretty minimal for the most part. Do you have a studio philosophy?

Ant: I guess that wouldn't be the main intention. It used to be, you know, "little is better" type of thing. I wouldn't necessarily say I think that's the case now. At the time that was the sound I liked, and I also thought some of the rappers I worked with sounded better that way, just focusing on every little word. Sometimes MCs don't have the punch to really carry a big sound. I think some rappers make records with these big sounds and they're so lost in there they don't even matter.

XLR8R: Is there something that you might do to counter that when you record emcees?

Ant: No. I think I just work with people with good [voices] and their personality really shows through.

www.rhymesayers.com



In Ant's studio (clockwise from left): Emu SP1200, ProTools, Ensoniq ASR10 and Yamaha RX5

>> SINCE TASTES IN FADER-FEEL VARY, STANTON INCLUDES A TUBE OF CAIGLUBE WITH EACH MIXER.

BATTLE CAT

With bragging rights as the exclusive mixer of the Allies Allstar Beatdown battle, the two-channel **Stanton SA-5** has already caused quite a buzz in the turntablist community. Stanton made the wise decision to go with custom Penny and Giles faders and crossfader, a big improvement over Stanton's much-too-light Focus fader. The cross-fader is loose and smooth right out of the box, but since tastes in fader-feel vary, Stanton includes a tube of Caiglube with each mixer. The SA-5 breaks new ground in that it's the first battle mixer without a single rotary knob. It features an exceptionally clean design, perfect for battling, and is roughly the same size as other comparable mixers (although slightly wider than Rane's TTM-56). Its impressive array of features include toggle switches instead of buttons for the cross-fader and channel reverse (hamster), and an innovative program reverse, which switches not just the fader, but the entire programs, including the EQs. (One unfortunate potential drawback: the hamster switches are at the top of the mixer). The battle-specific functions are where this mixer really shines. The session mix allows you to connect another mixer as well as control its volume—perfect for team routines. There's a headphone mute button just above the crossfader, an additional headphone jack on the back of the mixer, and two unique inline jacks for the front headphones (1/4" and 1/8") to prevent damage during battle. There's even a post-crossfader cue function that lets you practice routines in your headphones (or while your roommate watches the game). The SA-5 is perfect for turntablists, but it serves mix DJs well, too, with a cue crossfader and three-position curve-control on all faders. In short, it's a very good all-around mixer and an excellent battle mixer. The best part? All these features and innovations carry a suggested price tag of only \$399.00. You can't get fresher than this. *Ross Hogg*

MSRP: \$399.00; www.stantonmagnetics.com



>> YEAH, MOTU STANDS FOR MARK OF THE UNICORN—GOT ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT IT, BUDDY?

MACH, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS

Many music software junkies have been waiting a long time for this one, and for good reason. MOTU's new **Mach Five** (yeah, MOTU stands for Mark Of The Unicorn—got anything to say about it, buddy?) is a universal sampler that brings everything under one roof—it works as a VST, MAS, Audio Unit, HTDM, RTAS and DXI plug-in. It plays files in nearly all file formats, including Akai, Sample Cell, EXS24, Gigasampler, Kurzweil, E-Mu and Roland. That means you can finally—finally!—transfer all of your MPC 2000 samples to your Mac and Windows computers. Another sweet feature is the sampler's easy drag-and-drop capability without the need to convert file formats—good news for hip-hop heads looking to move into the computer realm. The Mach Five features up to four effects per channel—all with pristine sound quality—and allows you to bring in external outsourced effects and tweak all the sounds with built-in low-frequency oscillators. A waveform editor lets you screw around with uncleared samples until they're totally unrecognizable, and the sampling engine is powerful enough to allow you to mess with your loops on the fly à la Ableton Live. Take aim and fire away. *Jesse Terry*

MSRP: \$395; www.motu.com



QUICKIE OCTIV VOLUME LOGIC PLUG-IN

Audio-pioneers Octiv have collaborated with Macintosh wizards Rogue Amoeba to create the first-ever audio plug-in for Apple I-tunes: a device

that adjusts the volume of any audio file thousands of times per second in real-time. This is a seriously easy way to give tracks some extra punch, reduce or increase bass, and annoy the neighbors. *Jenn Marston*
PROS: Loud. Really, really loud. The range on the bass booster is delightfully more than anyone would ever need. Noise reduction also a plus.
CONS: The genre presets to which files can be set are limited to the most basic kinds (e.g. rock, classical, jazz, pop); the monstrous increase in volume only sounds decent on a quality set of speakers.

MSRP: beta version is free; www.octiv.com

EVOLVE OR DIE

With years of conceptualization behind it, both precision and mind-altering audio remain the key offerings of this massive tabletop synth. **Dave Smith**, the designer of the **Evolver Synth**, has been on the frontline of electronic music evolution and hardware/software manufacturing for over 30 years. Founder of the momentous Sequential Circuits Company in the mid-'70s, Smith designed the epic Pro-One and Prophet line of hardware synthesizers, as well as the Drumtrax drum box and countless numbers of other electronic toys. More importantly, Smith wrote and implemented the thesis for MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface), refining a theory initially proposed as UMI (Universal Musical Interface) during the NAMM show in 1982. As the universal language that determines how digital instruments interact with computers, MIDI has dictated electronic music's evolution; no piece of musical hardware is produced today without MIDI implementation. Manufactured by Smith's current company, Dave Smith Instruments, the Evolver continues his legacy. It packs together hybrid electronics, including hard-wired analog circuits as well as two dedicated massive DSP chips to direct and process all digital electronics. Starting with two warm voltage-controlled analog oscillators and two digital FM oscillators, the path of this monophonic monster continues to your choice of either a voltage-controlled analog 2/4 pole low-pass filter or a digital high-pass filter; this lets you control the warmth or crunch your signal needs. Evolver's four LFOs and three envelopes offer many modulation sources, and the box includes four sequencers, all of which can be used as either note-triggers or modulators. With over 58 modulation destinations (maybe it should've been named the Modulator), this synth is a patch-less recreation of the giant monolith synths of yesteryear. It's also quite possibly the finest—and last—monophonic hardware synth you'll ever need to own. *PRAXIS*

MSRP: \$499; www.davesmithinstruments.com





VIS-ED SHYNOLA

WHAT DO NIKE, RADIOHEAD, GROOVERIDER AND THE RAPTURE ALL HAVE IN COMMON? THEY'VE ALL BEEN VICTIMS OF SHYNOLA.

WORDS STEPHEN CHRISTIAN IMAGES SHYNOLA

Whatever those boys of Shynola are smoking, I wish they'd pass it along to all the Hype Williams clones currently clogging the glitzy, substance-free world of music videos. The London quartet (artists Gideon Baws, Jason Groves, Chris Harding and Kenny Kenworthy) create disarmingly hallucinogenic combinations of live action film, warm cell animation and Playstation-ready polygon manipulation that have crept into the weary cerebellums of visual-savvy music lovers across the globe.

Before legions of hopelessly loyal Radiohead fans began wetting themselves at the sight of the blink-and-you'll-miss-them "blips" that Shynola created to pro-

mote *Kid A*, their animated short "The Littlest Robo" perked the peepers of perpetual culture fiend James Lavelle. Lavelle soon had his Bathing Ape-clad ass on the phone asking Shynola to direct the video for UNKLE's "Guns Blazing" and recommending them to DJ Shadow. This gig would serve to derail the Shynola lads from the common fate of artful film school grads—working nights in a video store—and subsequently lead to them directing clips for Grooverider, Morcheeba and Pavement's Stephen Malkmus, and joining Mike Mills and Roman Coppola's *costra nostra* ish music vid agency The Director's Bureau.

More recently, Shynola has been making doodles

move for some of pop/rock's heavy hitters, electrocuting Blur in the clip for "Crazy Beat" and turning Junior Senior into 8-bit, gay/straight Mario and Luigi-type video-game heroes for "Move Your Feet."

In fact, two of the best videos currently gasping for air between Britney's boob shots and R. Kelly's anthemic quasi-pedophilia sport Shynola's handiwork. Their seductively acid-fried clip for Queens of The Stone Age's "Go With The Flow" re-imagines Mad Max as day-glo porn, while The Rapture's "House of Jealous Lovers" animates Brooklyn punk flyers into a frenetic Xeroxed nightmare. Not for the faint of grey matter.



XLR8R: WHAT'S BEHIND THE NAME SHYNOLA?
GB: DON'T READ TOO MUCH INTO IT... IT'S JUST NONSENSE, STUPID SCHOOLBOY HUMOR. YOU HAVE TO CALL YOURSELF SOMETHING, AND WE DIDN'T WANT TO BE ANOTHER BLAND TOMATO OUTFIT.

XLR8R: How did you come together to form Shynola?

Gideon Baws: We met at art college, and bonded over our mutual hatred of what went on there. We got into making collaborative work, which tutors didn't like, as they couldn't give us individual grades...so much for artistic expression. Slap a grade on it! We were lucky and smart enough to stick together as a group when we left, and have been working together in one form or another ever since.

XLR8R: What's behind the name Shynola?

GB: Don't read too much into it... it's just nonsense, stupid schoolboy humor. You have to call yourself something, and we didn't want to be another bland Tomato outfit.

XLR8R: What role does each of you play in creating your work?

GB: We're constantly adjusting our roles and try to find a way to all fit in to the needs of any given project. We all trained as illustrators, so we come at it from that direction. Once we have defined what to do in words and pictures, we then try to find a way to make it move.

XLR8R: What artists do you look up to?

Chris Harding: I don't know if "look up to" is the right way to put it, but artists whose work we admire include (in no particular order) Chris Ware, Takashi Murakami, Will Oldham, Hayao Miyazaki, John Lasseter, David Lynch, Chris Morris, David Shrigley, Dave Cooper, Tony Millionaire, Howe Gelb, Matthew Barney, Futura 2000, the Cohen brothers, Ben Drury, Zongamin, Aphex Twin, Valve, Jan Svankmajer, Phil Mulloy, Stuart Hilton, Tim Hope, Mike Patton...I could go on.

XLR8R: What music is in rotation at Shynola HQ?

CH: Ring tones from our mobile phones. They're polyphonic these days, you know.

XLR8R: What project has been your favorite to work on and why?

CH: I think the most fun we had was when we did our very first professional animations. We did odds and ends for TV shows and stuff, and it was just so exciting that we were making work and getting paid for it, and people were getting to see it. Then we did our first music video (for Quannum) and that was such a buzz, because we never dreamed we'd be allowed to make

music videos. There's probably an element of nostalgia at play too. The last job always seems the most painful because it's the freshest in your mind. As time passes, you forget the things that you didn't enjoy (the late nights and interference from marketing people at record companies) and you just remember that you were the person who visualized a great piece of music and that's how a lot of people will remember it. Creatively, it's very rewarding.

XLR8R: What are you working on now?

Jason Groves: At the moment we're just starting work on a project with Hammer and Tongs. They're directing a film version of *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* and they've asked us to do all of the Guide entries. It's a huge task for us, because at the moment we don't have the computer power to create film-sized frames, and, as there are only four of us, it will be months and months of work. It's a nerd's wet dream, really: not only do we get to work on a cult sci-fi novel that we all love, we also get to buy a whole load of new computer equipment to work on.

XLR8R: If you could choose any song to create a video for, what would it be?

JG: Any song? That's a hard one. Off the top of my head, I would choose to remake the video for The Streets' first single, "Let's Push Things Forward." It's such a great song and I think the video that was made for it is just boring. A tragedy! We pitched on it when the song was doing the rounds of all the music video agencies, but they didn't like our idea—which is fair enough. But that song deserves a great video. Maybe I should wish that Michel Gondry could remake the video!

XLR8R: What influences/inspires/informs your work?

JG: Too many things to list, really. But fundamentally we like to tell stories with pictures and we want to learn how to do it better. That and our love of music is always the motivation behind our work. Even when we're making something that's essentially abstract, there's still an element of visual storytelling. This is probably one of the main reasons that we tend to make fairly low-tech looking stuff. The story matters more than the look of the animation. Don't get me wrong, we came from a design background and we want all our work to look good, but at the same time we want to tell a story in pictures rather than create wallpaper for MTV.

www.shynola.com



PREVIOUS PAGE:
Queens of the Stone Age "Go With The Flow"

THESE PAGES:
TOP L TO R
Blur "Good Song"
The Rapture "House of Jealous Lovers"

MIDDLE L TO R
Junior Senior "Move Your Feet"
IBID
Blur "Good Song"

BOTTOM
UNKLE "Eye for an eye"





TBC PARADISE REGAINED?

A LITTLE OVER A YEAR AGO, A BOMB PLANTED BY INDONESIAN ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS DESTROYED BUCOLIC BALI'S SEMBLANCE OF TRANQUILITY, AND THREATENED ITS FLOW OF WESTERN VISITORS. SO WHY DID WASHINGTON DC'S STEVIE G RETURN TO THE ISLAND TO DJ FOR THREE MONTHS?

September 11, 2002 was the day I chose to fly back to the States after my first month and a half stint in Bali, Indonesia. Odds favored that day being one of the safest to travel, exactly a year after the deadliest attack on US soil. I was returning from a dream gig as summer DJ co-resident at Ku de Ta, a beautiful open-air restaurant/bar situated in Seminyak, Bali where I handled the sunsets from 4PM to 7PM daily. My stage was a grassy pitch with the sway of coconut trees providing the canopy and the crashing surf just meters away.

So many aspects of this island and its people had impressed me during this first visit, including both the durability of Balinese Hindu traditions in the face of heavy Western influence and urbanization, and Bali's genteel and tolerant populace, with their rich history of art and music. Bali presented itself as a true anomaly, a "last paradise" where a very particular spiritual harmony presided over everything from the chaos of Third World traffic to the polemics of cultural tourism. It seemed untouchable.

On October 12, a month after I returned to DC, two car bombs devastated the Sari Nightclub in Kuta, leveling an entire block and killing over 200 Australians, Europeans and Indonesians. Although much smaller in scale to the US attacks, the effects were relatively comparable in psychological and economic damage to an island with a tourist intake that supports a large workforce from Bali and neighboring Java. Although no one has admitted responsibility for the bombing, two members of the radical Islamic group Jemaah Islamiyah were convicted and sentenced to death in Jakarta, Indonesia over the summer.

The Sari Club was a mere 10-minute drive from Ku de Ta on a road I had frequented during my stay. After phoning Bali to make sure my friends were okay, I reeled in sadness and amazement over the incident. If Bali could be chosen as a target, then surely, there's no safe place left on earth. Although I was never hesitant about returning, I had given up hope of a repeat residency at Ku de Ta. Then, when the SARS crisis hit Asia and bombs flew over Baghdad, I figured it was a done deal. But in a remarkable display of faith over experience, the club asked me back for an extended summer season. Friends and family questioned my decision to return. I replied, "I live in the murder capital of America and the next potential Ground Zero. How much worse can Bali really be?"

Upon arrival this past summer, I was once again greeted by the same soothing tropical familiarity, the same smiling faces, the same blue seas and starry skies, the same lush greenery, the same hospitality and generosity I enjoyed during my last visit. But there was also evidence of a new Bali, from security barriers and vehicle checks to T-shirts emblazoned with the stenciled logos "Fuck Terrorist" (sic) and "Osama Don't Surf." Attendance at Ku de Ta itself was double the year before, owing to its picturesque setting and varied musical selection (it's the only spot in Bali that offers music beyond the mediocre and generic "funky, progressive, tribal, trance" sound tags that pervade the island's other bars and clubs). On the outside, tourism had undeniably taken a hit.

From talking to locals and expats alike, I heard percentages of anywhere from 20% to 70% down from last year's numbers. Streets, restaurants, bars and shops were slightly less crowded than last summer, but at the same time I noted the many familiar faces of those undaunted by the bombing and willing to show support for Bali in its time of need. These repeat visitors, mostly Australians and Europeans, seem to recognize it as a truly unique place, and virtually all new visitors eventually return.

Many commemorative ceremonies have taken place to both remember the bombing and encourage renewed tourism, including a month-long "Kuta Karnival" that began on September 11 and ended on October 12. But only time and understanding will reestablish Bali as a tourist destination, and the iron conviction and peerless collective strength of the Balinese will allow the island to regain its stature as a last paradise locale. In the words of Balinese traditional healer Ketut Arsana, "We are living in the age of Kali, an age of increasing uncertainty and degradation of morality and spirituality. In this age, however, God is very generous in His blessings. To those who really want them, material things are granted; who want to be agents of destruction are given the permission; and those who want to pursue goodness are especially blessed. We're only being asked to be prepared to face the consequences."

S. Gamboa (a.k.a. Stevie G) has been involved with live music and DJing in Washington DC since 1988. He currently has a remix EP out on Sahara Records and is due to return to Bali as a DJ in summer 2004.

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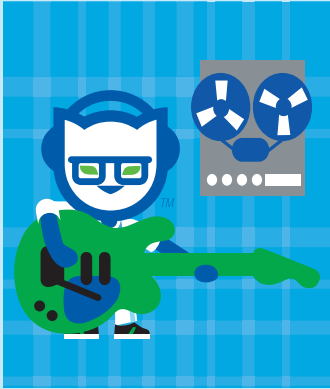
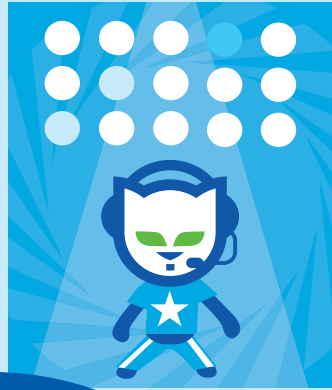
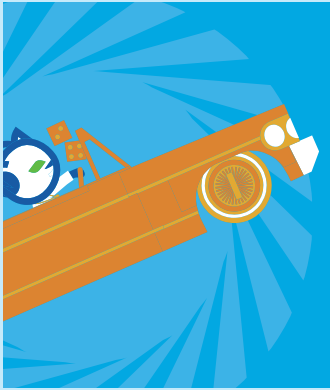
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